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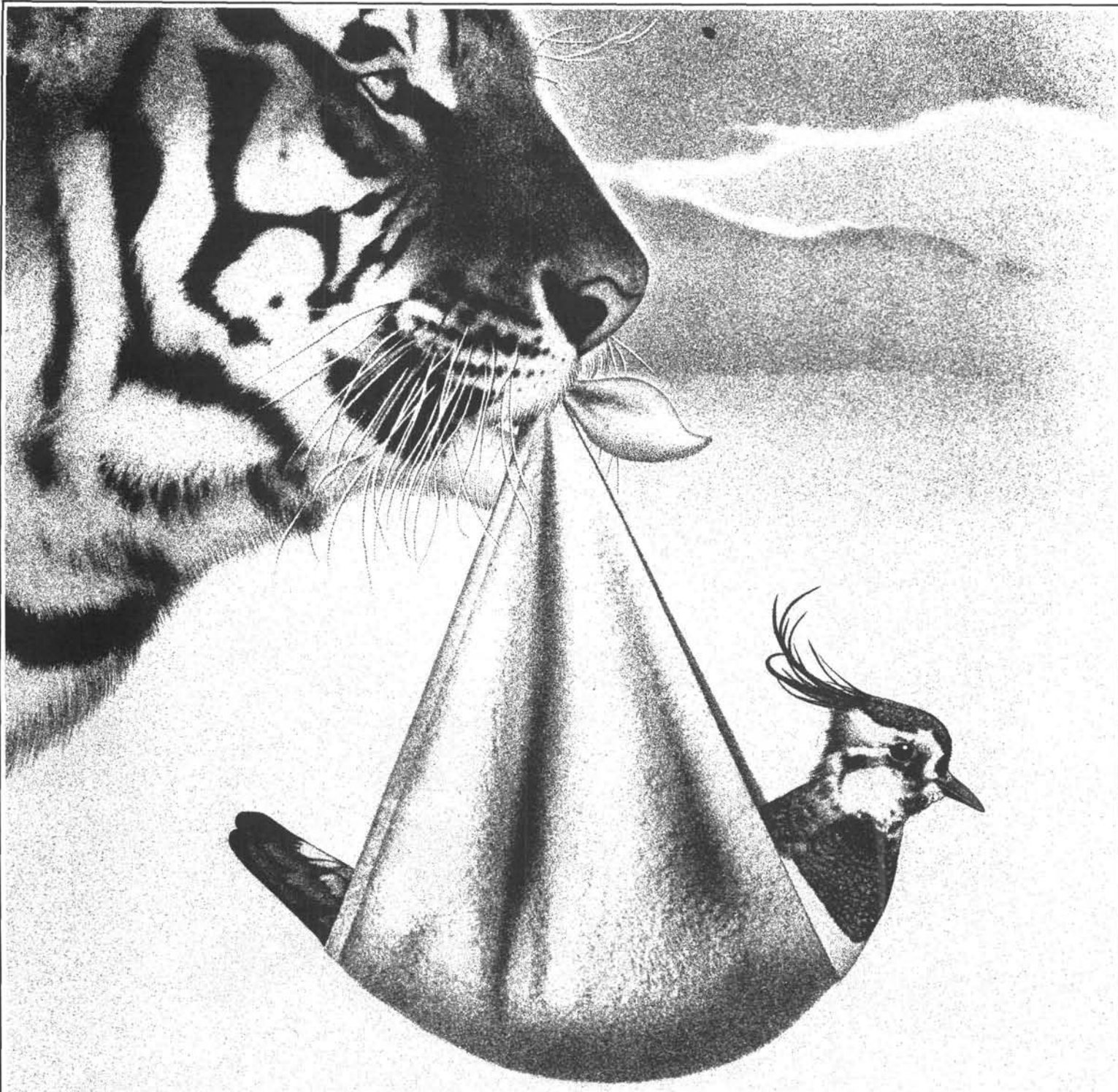
- Kellner on bad pollsters ● Molloy on *News on Sunday*
- A Communist on Glasnost ● Hitchens on Irangate
- Rosalind Coward on the state of left cultural theory

SECRET SOCIETY
3: The power of
the top
policemen

CHANGING PARTNERS?

At no time
since the war
has there been so
much talk of and
scope for realignment
in politics

Cover illustration: John Minnion



Birth of a great idea.

In the last 300 years, around 300 species of birds have vanished from the world. Many are still threatened today, and in Britain these include the snipe, corncrake, and barn owl.

Even the lapwing is less common.

Any ideas to help reverse the situation must be welcome, and this European Year of the Environment sees the birth of a new scheme to recognise outstanding achievements in the field of wild bird and countryside conservation.

Sponsored by Esso, it is called the RSPB Birds and Countryside Awards. To encourage as many people as possible to get involved, there are four different award categories;

individual, industry, media and European. In addition we will be giving our own Esso award.

As a result, a wide variety of subjects will come under the spotlight, from habitat creation and improvement to the fight against pollution, protection of rare species, showing people wildlife and contributions through journalism.

The 1987 awards will be given at a special lunch in London in July, and nominations are now being judged.

For information about the scheme, we invite you to write to RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2BR.

You could, after all, be carried away with ideas.



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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Christopher Price: Guangzhou Diary 4
News: 5

Peter Kellner: It's Labour's image that has plunged 6

The Thatcherite victory and SDP breakaway were just beginnings: **Anthony Wright, Harry Phibbs, Danny Finkelstein** and **Felix Dodds** explore from different angles where the political shifts might lead 7-10

Duncan Campbell pursues the secret society among the top cops 11

Mike Molloy finds no news on Sunday 14
Newstatesperson: Clare Short 14

Christopher Hitchens goes to the Irangate hearings 15

Mick Costello: Gorbachev, by the light of the *Morning Star* 18

ARTS

John Spurling: Art 19

Judith Williamson: Cinema 20

Hugo Williams: Television 20

Naseem Khan: Work in Progress on the National Arts Debate 21

BOOKS

Rosalind Coward: New cultural theory journals 22

Sara Maitland: Fiction: Penelope Lively 23

Liz Heron: Fiction: Primo Levi 24

BACKCHAT

Diana Eden: Infra Dig 28

Gary Herman: First Person 28

Colin Spencer: Food 29

Crossword 29

Weekend competition 30

Chess: George Botterill 31

Ralph Edney 31

This England 31

PLUS

Roger Woddis 4

Christian Clark: Vatican 15
Letters 25

NEXT WEEK



As election fever breaks

— we give you . . .
100 REASONS FOR
NOT VOTING
CONSERVATIVE.

Plus Secret Society 4: the secret failures of Britain's radar defences; Hugh O'Shaughnessy on Nicaragua; and, unavoidably held over again, the Great Defence Policy Debate resumes

Vote rationally

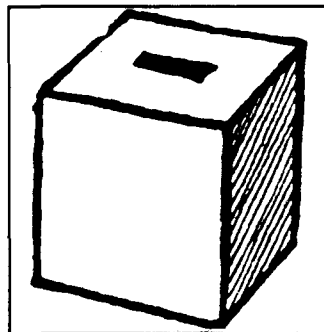
PROPORTIONAL representation is now gaining ground as a favoured reform for the left, outside of Alliance ranks. For long it has had only a few prominent followers in the labour movement: Arthur Scargill, the left-wing mineworkers' president, is one; so is Gavin Laird, the right-wing engineers' general secretary. Scargill think it is a prerequisite of socialism, Laird of equity.

They are being joined by a much more numerous group, who simply see that the old system which delivered alternating two-party governments as no longer capable of delivering the goods. These are the invaluable flowers of any democratic system, the opportunists: invaluable and democratic (within certain limits) because their opportunism consists in changing their minds when the people who elect them change theirs. The people seem to have decided, for the time being, that a three-party competition for political power is what they want; but its co-existence with a first-past-the-post electoral system produces results which do not conform to evidently-expressed voting preferences. So all those who do not benefit from these results — the non-Conservative majority — now look on electoral reform more kindly than many of them did in the past.

Those in this camp accept, as they must, that for the present Labour is likely at best to win no more seats under PR than it does under first-past-the-post, and that the Alliance will be the obvious and immediate beneficiary. But, the argument runs, better that this be the case and that the present opposition parties together get a higher parliamentary representation than the Conservatives, so that at least the possibility of a centre-left deal emerges.

Writing in *New Socialist* this month, Patrick Dunleavy claims that by putting itself behind electoral reform, Labour could 'help ensure that it is a Labour government which shapes the new electoral system that must surely come, one way or another, in the next decade. History shows that the party which pushes through electoral change is usually its primary beneficiary.' Alliance members are entitled to remark that this conversion smacks of the highly convenient; but, in the longer run, that hardly matters.

There are other calculations, however, on the left. For those on the radical wing of politics, in and out of the Labour Party, a new opening is now being glimpsed. Attracted by the success of the West German Green party — which has rolled up in it Marxist, environmental, feminist and other currents, appealing to young professionals and alternative lifestyles and many who are both —



the British 'new' left sees PR as securing for their politics a parliamentary representation which they have never really had within the Labour or Liberal parties.

The launch issue of yet another new magazine, *Interlink* — the voice of the Socialist Society — argues for proportional representation if socialism is to escape marginalisation: John Palmer, a

Socialist Society luminary and veteran of the radical left, believes that such a separate, proportionally-elected party is essential to 'shift the parameters of public debate' to the left.

Outside the far left, opinions are split on the desirability of such an outcome. On one analysis, it provides a structure — as does, say, the French Communist Party with which such a grouping is continually compared — for people of fundamentalist socialist, or new leftist, views; and that would make clear the divisions between them and the social democrats in the Labour Party and elsewhere. On another, it is a malign strategy for securing a modicum of influence for an 'unrepresentative' group so that they could, in a future election, determine the programme of a coalition government.

But this and other objections are overcome, surely, by the best of all reasons, and the one which should command support from all on the left: that first-past-the-post now does not produce a result which can be defended rationally in a three-party system. Since the left always has, and always will, defend its propositions on the grounds of reason, then the justice of considering change can no longer be ignored. It has not originated from the labour movement: that is no reason for disqualification. It *has* come from people who bitterly oppose Labour, some of whom left the party and contributed to the present split in the left; seven years on, it is time to stop brooding over that.

Proportional representation will throw up, no doubt, undesirable results — as it has done in Ireland, Italy, France, West Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark . . . indeed, every democratic country which operates one or other PR system, which is almost every democratic country. Its central desirability, however, is that it more closely approximates to the political choice of the electorate than the system we presently have.

The issue *does* give Labour an opportunity to transcend immediate advantage, or disadvantage, and support a cause not its own. By doing so, it will instantly deprive the Conservative Party of an ally in retaining the present system — and thus underscore its minority status. That is a valuable lesson to hammer home now. □

DIARY

Guangzhou
'Killing me softly with your love.' As the strobes moved round the disco of the newly-built Central Hotel in Canton (or Guangzhou as we must all now call it) the *jeunesse dorée* of the city gyrated easily and confidently to the new bourgeois liberalism. This passion for Levis and Western music is still only on the fringes of the largest nation on earth. But the government is nervous about it. They are still not sure how fast to allow the virus of the Coca Cola culture, which they let in with Richard Nixon 15 years ago, penetrate further.

The current line is that there is no contradiction between the new post-Mao policies — 'an opening to the world' and 'modernisation' — and China's official Marxist-Leninist socialism. Reassurance has been given to Hong Kong and Macau that 'two Chinas' can coexist within one nation into the next century.

But tensions are showing already which have nothing to do with the advent of these two enclaves of capitalist competition. The student riots of last December came as a shock and a warning; and the dismissal of Hu as general secretary of the Party and the present government campaign against 'bourgeois liberalism' can only be temporary expedients to hold the situation. Deng Xiaoping, China's great survivor, is a stabilising influence, but he cannot live for ever.

The current struggle for the premiership — to be resolved at the Party conference this autumn — will give some indication of how the balance will eventually tip between the new bourgeoisie and the old proletarians. (The current premier, Zhao Ziyang is expected to take over the substantive job of Party Secretary at the Conference.) The favourite for the premiership is Li Peng, a respected 57-year-old Moscow-educated vice-premier. But others, even outsiders, are being mentioned. One of them is Li Rihuan, the mayor of Tianjin, China's third city.

I am on a visit to Tianjin (on old English maps, Tientsin) to explore educational links with Leeds. We tiptoe round the subject of last year's student riots. They shrug them off. 'The youngsters missed out on the cultural revolution and they wanted a little taste of what their fathers experienced. Only one per cent of the students were involved.' 'Yes,' we reply diplomatically, 'only one per cent of Leeds United's football supporters are involved when they riot.' We both understand that the parallel is not exact.

In England, an underclass is reacting to exclusion from respectable society; in China it is the respectable offspring of the bourgeoisie who are restless — a cultural revolution in reverse. The reaction of the authorities has been firm but not violent. First, there is to be no going back to the cultural revolution; intellectuals can now count themselves as members of the proletariat. But

second, it has been necessary to give the student leaders some compulsory re-education in Marxist-Leninist principles.

Part of the problem lies in the rigid nature of the Chinese education system. Selection abounds and comes early. It also produces results. In the accelerated stream of one of Tianjin's primary schools a group of 8-year-olds presented us — in perfect English — with a moral playlet about peasant solidarity. Rendering 'The More We Are Together, The Stronger We Shall Be' roughly to the tune of 'Easter Parade', an extended family of them — grandparents, parents and children — finally succeeded in uprooting a fellow pupil dressed as a turnip. Deng would have been proud of them.

But for most of their brothers and sisters at school and college it is noses to the grindstone and learning by rote. Getting a grip of the tens of thousands of Chinese characters makes a lot of rote learning essential. But the habit burns itself in

ROGER WODDIS

Are you sleeping well, Mr President?

Benjamin Linders, who died in an ambush in Nicaragua last week, was the first American citizen to be killed by the contras

He wasn't your ideal all-American hero. He didn't go out there to waste the poor and hungry. He waved no huge flags, shed no blood, you would say he was traitorously weak. All he aimed to do was use his skill to build something of value. That doesn't make for peak viewing or a good story. Worst of all, he didn't learn from you how to stain Old Glory.

He was twenty-seven. His death, the death of an engineer from Portland, Oregon was none of your doing. You weren't there. All you did was blow the back of his head off. 'The hand that signed the paper felled a city.' But I don't suppose you've read Dylan Thomas.

Benjamin Linders is dead. Tell us about your conscience, Mr President. Does it disturb your dreams? How about a smile for the cameras, though it's as phoney as hell. Mr President, are you sleeping well?

to the whole culture of the curriculum. The Japanese government have recently adopted the (rather English) watchwords of 'flexibility and diversity'. In China, especially in the middle (secondary) schools, flexibility and diversity get short shrift.

Brooding over everything is the Chinese A level, the national exam which fixes everybody's chances of higher education for life. It imposes a curriculum which adapts uneasily to new technology, modernisation and openings to the world. It became clear during our visit that the meshing of the educational philosophies of Leeds and Tianjin would take a little time yet; though there are a lot of immediate opportunities for practical cooperation in technology and business.

Especially business. China lost a generation of skilled technical manpower in the cultural revolution. Much of Western finance — especially insurance — is an alien world to them. So, with a good deal of help from the World Bank, the Chinese are looking to foreign universities and colleges to provide a crash programme of training in business. Travel abroad is an attractive proposition to China's brightest college students; but the new unspoken *quid pro quo* for these new technocrats is that they concentrate on technical skills and keep off politics — and especially off student riots.

If China's education structure lacks flexibility, this is certainly not true of its political system. Increasing devolution gives big cities like Tianjin real resources to dispose of at their own discretion. They are finding a wide range of sponsors for joint prospects from the West and Japan — all hoping for a head start in the new capitalist economy when it takes off. The fact that Li Rihuan is even mentioned as a possible premier is an indication of this new diverse and devolved political framework. As local government goes under in Britain, it is on the up and up in China.

For all its political tensions, China feels a thoroughly friendly place. It is not just the traditional politeness. What marks it off from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is the relaxed atmosphere — even at the entry and exit points on its borders. Getting on the Hong Kong express at Guangzhou station feels a good deal less threatening than getting off a ferry at Dover. But the credibility gap in the current Chinese political puzzle remains the jarring incompatibility with Hong Kong when you get there. The Chinese believe they can bridge the gap; few in Hong Kong seem to agree with them.

Christopher Price

Christopher Price is director of Leeds Polytechnic.

Poverty is the spur

PRIVATISATION in the NHS has saved money mainly at the expense of workers' pay and conditions, and not because market forces have made services more efficient, according to an official report published last week.

The report, by Whitehall's auditor Sir Gordon Downey, doesn't phrase its conclusions quite like that, but interpretation is easy enough. The report says 'it is not possible to estimate their relative significance', but mentions these sources of savings: 'drawing up and reviewing specifications'; 'reductions in cleaning frequencies'; 'conditions of employment less favourable than those enjoyed by NHS staff'; 'greater use of part-time staff'; 'withdrawal of, or reduction in, bonus payments and overtime'; and 'greater productivity'. Only the first and last reasons are genuine improvements in 'efficiency', and it's striking that in most cases to date these have been achieved by the existing NHS workforce. (The second reason involves lower standards, which isn't most people's idea of greater efficiency either.) By last September, two-thirds of NHS cleaning, catering and laundry had been put out to competitive tender: private companies had won only a quarter of contracts (by value).

Because they don't have to stick to nationally-agreed NHS terms and conditions, private companies have been able to make greater savings than in-house teams, averaging 28 per cent as against 17 per cent. But the report quotes DHSS anxiety that contractors may have been 'loss-leading' to win early contracts, and points out that contractors, having won over half of all contracts put out to tender in the first year, won just 8 per cent of contracts in the last quarter.

There's no evidence that in-house teams are not as able to make genuine efficiency savings as private contractors. This matches the experience of local council workforces, which have come to terms with competitive tendering since 1980. But think how much more could have been done if the government had defined 'efficiency' in a positive way, and sought to provide the highest possible level of service using the existing staff on the same pay and conditions.

John Rentoul

Caterpillar tracks

IN THE MIDDLE of George Square in the middle of Glasgow there is a spanking new, sparkling clean pink bulldozer. It sits there, courtesy of the district council, as it has sat for the last nine weeks, awaiting the result of a legal argument between the Third World charity, War on Want, and the American multinational company, Caterpillar.

Affectionately known by everyone as the 'Pink Panther', it was made by the workers occupying the threatened Caterpillar plant at Uddingston outside Glasgow. It was given to War on Want, whose organisers quickly made arrangements to send it to work on a major construction project on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. Caterpillar's management, claiming that company property was being stolen, took out an interdict to stop them and the Pink Panther rumbled into George Square. Ever since, in the well-chosen words of

War on Want's General Secretary, George Galloway, it has been 'a very pink and public testament to a mean-spirited multinational'.

When, on 14 January, Caterpillar's American headquarters in Peoria, Illinois, had announced that the Uddingston plant was to be closed with the loss of 1,200 jobs, all Scotland howled. Just four months previously the company had announced a publicly-subsidised £62.5 million investment in the plant's future. In this context even the Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, described the closure decision as 'extraordinary'.

Then began one of the most important struggles for jobs Scotland has seen since the historic work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) in 1971. For a long 103 days 800 hourly-paid workers took control of the Caterpillar plant, forcibly exiling management to a posh hotel in Glasgow. Two weeks ago they finally agreed a deal and voted to end the sit-in. Some interpreted this as a defeat, others as a victory. Reality, as usual, lies somewhere in between.

The occupation galvanised support throughout the country, with an estimated quarter of a million pounds being raised to help the workers. It provided a focus for Scotland's anger and an example for future workforces under threat. It was also, by all accounts, especially well led by shop stewards' convenor, John Brannan.

There were, of course, a host of familiar problems. Workers' support for continuing the occupation, particularly after the company had acquired an interdict against it, was only maintained by a very narrow margin. Tired and broke, many were tempted by the promise of enhanced redundancy payments. The white-collar staff, despite some initial support, soon bailed out.

'On 14 January we had nothing, now we've got hope' is how one of the shop stewards described the outcome. Hope takes the form of a cumbersome working party which has commissioned a £52,000 international study to find a buyer for the Uddingston plant. Public hopes of success are predictably high, but private expectations are understandably low.

Hope also lay in the much-publicised offer to save some caterpillar jobs by Multi-Purpose All Terrain Holdings (MPAT), a small research and development company run by businessman David McWatt ('Everything I have done in the past has not been a failure'). When his business record was criticised by former associates, the man he had persuaded to become MPAT chairman, senior industrialist Sir Monty Finniston, sprang rather uninspiringly to his defence ('He's never been bankrupt and he's never been to prison'). Confidence in the company collapsed completely when Sir Monty (now renamed Python) subsequently resigned.

This train of events seemed so bizarre that conspiracy theorists suggested that Mr McWatt's offer was just a put-up job by Caterpillar management to lure the workers out of the plant. The notion is given some weight by Mr McWatt's known links with a right-wing American group, US Defence Preparedness Association, and his assertion that it was Caterpillar that first approached him.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the

occupation was worthwhile. It severely embarrassed Caterpillar's management. It forced the company to retain plant and equipment on site until mid-October, thereby assisting the prospects of another employer being found. It did fail to persuade the company to change its mind over closure. But then, given such a naked confrontation between the interests of capital and labour, that never even seemed a possibility.

There was the mounting pressure to give up from all those on the outside: first, and least surprisingly, from the Conservatives and employers. Then, the Scottish media's enthusiasm cooled. Finally, after the Court of Session in Edinburgh had (albeit reluctantly) granted management the interdict, the leadership of the workers' main union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, withdrew its support for the occupation.

The views of the men who actually organised the occupation were, in the words of one: 'The Labour Party and trade union leadership regarded us as an anachronism. They were guilty of one thing. They accepted that industrial action is not an effective way of defending jobs. They are wrong.'

Rob Edwards

If the caption fits

No 16



The last time we had Edwina Currie on the caption contest (our Christmas special), she was adding unsaturated fats to a Northerner's diet by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. What's she up to now? Captions to reach us by Monday 18 May. The best wins a £10 book token and appears in the issue of 22 May.

No 14: winner



Denis Thatcher (right): 'And now, first on the agenda . . .' (Jennifer Gubbay and Lisa Sevell, London NW11.)



PETER KELLNER

Will the real Labour Party please stand up?

BY THE TIME most people see this column, we shall have the verdict of 12 million electors choosing their councils for England (outside London) and Wales. Even if (as I indicated last week) the Tories do worse than their nationwide poll rating would indicate, it would be the shock of our age if Labour emerges from the election more popular than the Tories. Since Greenwich a sea-change has taken place in voters' attitudes to Labour. The party's most immediate task is to understand that change, in order to reverse it.

Within the past month two important pieces of polling evidence have emerged. Both have been partially reported by the newspapers that commissioned them; but set out in full, and side-by-side, they tell a story of immense significance.

The two polls were conducted by Gallup for the *Daily Telegraph* and Harris Research Centre for the *Observer*. In mid-April Gallup asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with each of nine statements about Labour. It had previously tested the same statements in January. They concerned the party's image. These were the results:

'Labour has become too extreme'

Agree: April 67% (January 53%)
Disagree: 24% (37%)

'Labour is the only party that can turn out the present government'

Agree: 28% (53%)
Disagree: 66% (38%)

'Labour's party leadership is poor now'

Agree: 69% (53%)
Disagree: 25% (40%)

'Labour would bring in real thorough-going changes'

Agree: 62% (69%)
Disagree: 28% (19%)

'Labour is too split and divided'

Agree: 73% (56%)
Disagree: 20% (33%)

'Labour is the only party that looks after ordinary working people and their families'

Agree: 39% (45%)
Disagree: 56% (48%)

'It's not very clear what a vote for Labour means these days'

Agree: 67% (59%)
Disagree: 25% (31%)

'Labour's policy of getting rid of all nuclear weapons would be dangerous'

Agree: 66% (60%)
Disagree: 22% (29%)

'The economy would be in a worse state under Labour'

Agree: 55% (41%)
Disagree: 32% (44%)

('Don't knows', which ranged from 5 to 15 per cent, have been omitted from those figures.)

Those results could scarcely make more depressing reading for Labour supporters. Over a three-month period, during which Labour's Gallup rating has fallen from 39.5 to 28 per cent, the party's image has taken a fearful battering.

The sharpest change has been the halving of the number who think Labour is the only party that can eject Mrs Thatcher from Downing Street. On most of the other 'image' statements, to do with extremism, leadership and division, the party's rating has deteriorated by about 15 points — rather more than its decline in voting support.

NOW TURN to Harris. Last month it also repeated a series of questions it had asked before. This time the issue was how each of the contenders for power would perform in government. Harris offered a list of six policy achievements, and asked about each party in turn. Which would a Conservative government carry out if elected? Which would Labour carry out? And the Alliance?

This time the comparison is with February. In the two months between the surveys, the Tories' voting support had risen from 39 to 42 per cent, Labour had fallen from 37 to 31, and the Alliance had risen from 23 to 25. This was how each of the parties rated as prospective governments; the figures show the percentages saying that party would carry out that policy.

'Reduce unemployment'

Those who say Conservatives would: April 37% (February 28%)
Labour: 64% (60%)
Alliance: 56% (45%)

'Improve Britain's health service'

Conservative: 33% (30%)
Labour: 77% (71%)
Alliance: 65% (56%)

'Improve Britain's schools'

Conservative: 35% (31%)
Labour: 61% (59%)
Alliance: 62% (54%)

'Keep inflation down'

Conservative: 67% (66%)
Labour: 27% (26%)
Alliance: 44% (35%)

'Cut the amount of income tax paid by people like you'

Conservative: 48% (48%)
Labour: 31% (32%)
Alliance: 28% (26%)

'Have an effective defence policy'

Conservative: 69% (68%)
Labour: 30% (31%)
Alliance: 39% (36%)

I have set out those results in full in order to avoid any suspicion of selectivity to prove a point. It is open to anyone to analyse the figures and reach their own conclusions. These are mine.

First, voters' perceptions of Labour's capacity to govern have *not* declined since February, despite the party's six-point drop in its support as measured by voting intention. On jobs and health (which Harris also found to be the two issues most frequently cited by electors in determining their votes), Labour's standing has actually risen since

February; on the other four issues there has been no statistically significant change.

If loss of faith in Labour's ability is *not* the explanation for Labour's decline, what is? The answer is, surely, to be found in those Gallup figures. It's not Labour's policies that are the problem, it's Labour's image.

Now 'image' is a vague term; let us be more precise. What these polls tell us, as other polls have shown since Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister, is that there is still widespread public goodwill for the Labour Party. It was to be found in the Darlington by-election in 1983 and Fulham last year, when popular local mainstream candidates performed well. It is to be found in a number of local councils, and is likely to be found again this Thursday, when 'Labour' conjures up thoughts of efficient, caring services rather than a party beset by extremists, racists and eccentrics. It has been found — both in opinion polls and in local by-elections — when Neil Kinnock has made a clear, publicly visible stand against Militant.

On each of these occasions, the real Labour Party has revealed itself to voters, not the phantom party dreamed up by Mr Kinnock's enemies. By 'enemies' I mean those both in the media and on the left: both paint essentially the same picture, of a party where the left holds sway, Kinnock is weak and the prospects of a revolutionary take-over are worth talking up. *That* is the image that threatens to torpedo Labour's election chances; that is the image that must be dispelled.

In recent years Labour has consistently been seen as 'divided' rather than 'united'; that is probably a fact of life for a roughly democratic party that argues out its differences in public.

But the kind of dissent offered by Militant, some of the London left and now by a minority of 'black section' activists, is of a different order. It is the kind of dissent that feeds precisely the image of Labour that makes the party unelectable. Some voters who want a 'real' Labour government, to create jobs, shorten hospital queues, improve our schools, offer local councils a fair deal and so on — they are the ones who are deterred by the sight of a party in which the anti-Kinnock left is allowed to roam free.

It is true that indolence on the part of past Labour leaderships has contributed to this mess. Labour's lunatic federal structure, which gives special voting rights at national level to Jews in Poale Zion and men (yes, *men*) in the women's section, is an imperfect being to defend as part of an internal party crusade. But we start from where we are, not where we would like to be. And where we are is caught in the gap between those who will vote Labour regardless, and those who would like to vote Labour; but only for the 'real' Labour Party that will deliver the opportunities, rights and services that they need.

That gap marks not just the difference between victory and defeat, but between victory and slow but inevitable annihilation. □

After June, the deluge?

We present a series of views on the shifts in party politics — shifts now being canvassed and discussed among parliamentarians, activists and commentators. The post electoral political map is being drawn now

'REALIGNMENT' is a new political board game played with increasing desperation by many on the left. After-the-election calculations are being made before the election is called, on the obvious assumption that a Tory victory is likely.

It is too early for such an assumption, as Conservative supporters and strategists will privately admit. Among the wild cards — a successful capturing of the moral ground over, say, unemployment by the opposition parties; the take-off of the tactical vote; and a loss of momentum or confidence by the Prime Minister.

A victory for Labour, or a Parliament with no overall majority, would introduce different calculations into the realignment spiders' webs now being spun, four of which we offer below. A Tory party deprived of victory would not be as certain as Harry Phibbs is (see p8) that the right will dominate political choice; nor would the left be so certain as Anthony Wright (p8) is that 'Labour has not reversed its decline'.

But even if the present dominant trend in the polls is reversed, some at least of the deeper reasons for realignment will remain. And if it is not, then looking around the party dance floor for new partners will be the hottest political game in town. The present main assumptions in the realignment variants are these:

- The right is dominant. This is a view held across the spectrum, and is very largely based on the evidence of the opinion polls: a real poll, the local government elections in England and Wales, will now be available to allow us to see — to an extent, since these results are highly partial — how far this evidence can be trusted.

- Within the right itself, there is a surprisingly solid consensus that few divisions of real moment presently afflict the Conservative Party. Harry Phibbs, on the party's right, argues that 'all but the diehard wets are following a Thatcherite agenda'. Wets would put it differently: but a number who spoke to the *NS* last week stressed that their influence on policy-making in such fields as employment, education and social policy was now being felt, and that the government style was moving to the centre. 'The biggest problem we had was the mechanistic economist approach,' said one. 'And that's changed now. I don't see any large issue of principle that would propel MPs, or many members, out of the party into another one whatever the result of the election.'

- The centre is undecided — or more precisely, different elements within it have made, or are making, differing decisions. Danny Finkelstein of the SDP national committee argues (p9) against his party making a full merger with the Alliance on the grounds that it would then become another



John Minnion

warring and incoherent 'broad church' party.

Others in the Alliance favour a full merger as a prelude to replacing Labour as the centre-left opposition; others still — as William Rodgers, in a controversial article for the *New Democrat* earlier this year — favour the Alliance becoming a three-legged animal composed of Liberals, SDP and centre-right Labour.

- Labour will go through a bloodbath after the election if it loses. Anthony Wright makes clear the main options: a further large scale defection to the centre; a purge of the left within Labour's ranks; or the formation of a new party by the centre right, the left retaining the party structure.

Of these, many within the Labour Party believe some variant of a purge — or a left-right struggle more bitter than any seen since the war — is most likely. MPs from the right through to soft left representing provincial seats (the vast majority) are now talking over plans which would see Labour recruit large numbers of trade unionists at low fees, able to swamp what they see as the malign and disproportionate effects of London and London-style politics. At the same time, these MPs and their supporters in the unions and elsewhere will press for the national executive to reflect regional interests. 'A war on London' is now seen as inevitable: which means a war on the new left concerns over sexuality and militant anti-racism, to reconstruct the workers-intellectuals alliance that gave Labour coherence up to the 1970s.

- Proportional representation is at least an interesting idea (see leader p.3). This idea barely exists within the right — a few Tory MPs, like Robin Squire, nurse its flame without much hope of extra fuel soon, but it is now being carefully examined by the left outside of Alliance ranks. For many, the issue is opportunistic: the old system no longer delivers the goods, let's try something new.

But that's how things change.

THESE parliamentary and top-level moves are or will be reflections of two deeper movements: first, that the electoral system in three-party politics delivers unfair results for a people who give a minority vote to the government and wasted ones to a split opposition — especially to the Alliance; and second, that ideas of what can constitute a political philosophy of the left which can in turn provide a practical basis for government have been in some turmoil and will continue to be.

On the 'radical' left — for which Felix Dodds (p10) speaks — there is a growing interest in uniting round themes which have been given priority by the German Greens and are now part of a new left menu: the 'traditional' social democrats in and out of the Labour Party now look to the market and to a new commitment to equality; while some of the unions on the 'corporatist' left still see a strong state and public ownership as the best response to recurrent crises in the economy. These are not, naturally, watertight compartments: but they could become so, and their leaderships are manoeuvring even now to sight their best advantage.

Finally, personal gain (in the political sense) will play its large and customarily understated part. Labour MPs sitting for safe seats with supportive management committees will think more than twice about joining the Alliance or forming a new party unless Labour does terribly badly in the elections. The most dripping wet is unlikely to discover that the Tory party of the immediate future presents his conscience with harsher tests than it has in the past eight. Alliance people may disagree about merger and future alliances, but they are mostly there to stay. Changes *within* the parties, barring a Labour or Alliance catastrophe, presently appear the best bet.

The liberal left: three options

IT WAS CLEAR at the time, and has become even clearer since, that the Social Democrat fissure from the Labour Party in 1981 was the beginning, not the end, of a process of fundamental change in the British party system. Once the dam had been breached, it was always unlikely that it would be shored up again.

The dam, of course, was Labour's effective monopoly of the progressive side of British politics, of what used to be called a 'broad left' before that term was narrowed into its precise opposite. That monopoly of progressivism (not threatened, of course, by a peripheral Liberalism with an electoral appeal only to periodically disillusioned Conservatives and the politically rootless) was a unique historical asset for a party of the left, despite the strains and tensions which inevitably came with it. Not the least of its advantages was the fact that, in a conservative country, it could regularly bring the left to power.

The logic of this situation for Labour was (or should have been) twofold. First, that it was essential to keep its internal coalition intact; and, second, that if it did break down at any point the supreme task was to seal off the gap and repair the damage. The SDP secession marked a refusal of the former logic. It is now time to acknowledge the failure of the latter. Labour has not reversed its decline, the forces of progressivism are split, a multi-party political system delivers a one-party governing system, and Thatcherism contemplates its third malevolent term. So what is to be done?

Before suggesting an answer (or, rather, two), a word is needed about those who might be interested in the question. They include those who, despite the appearance of enlarged political choice, have found their actual political choice increasingly restricted. They want a coherent and principled party of the moderate left, but are confronted instead with a choice between a Labour Party which has become such a bundle of contradictions that it has had to abandon any attempt to define what it stands for and a Social Democratic Party which has been tutored by Owenite opportunism to disavow any connection with the left at all. They include people who know that most social democrats in Britain are still to be found in the Labour Party, but who also know that Labour has never become a proper social democratic party. They also include people who prefer to describe themselves as democratic socialists but who have come to believe, reluctantly, that while there is a future for democratic socialism that future may be sunk by the intractable problems of the Labour Party.

Such people, taken together, might be called 'liberal socialists'. This is a term with a considerable historical pedigree in Britain. It was invented early in the century by the theorists of the New Liberalism. 'If you want to know what British socialism is', Harold Laski used to tease his students at LSE, 'you should read a little book written by Professor Hobhouse. Its title is *Liberalism*.' G.D.H. Cole used the term to describe his reconstruction of Fabianism in the 1930s, while the work of R.H. Tawney

exemplified it. As a tradition, it not only reflected a belief that it was possible, and necessary, to be both liberal in politics and socialist in economics, but that in combination, as liberal socialism, it offered a distinctive way of thinking about the general character of a reformed social order and how to achieve it.

The conventional historical verdict is that this tradition was assimilated by the Labour Party. However, it had to find its place alongside the labourism, the centralising collectivism, the sub-Marxism and the other elements in Labour's motley ideological coalition. As long as that coalition was intact, electorally and organisationally, this could be regarded as an acceptable arrangement. It is no longer acceptable, because the coalition has fallen apart, because the moderate left is divided against itself, because the right is rampant, and because something has to be done about it. Then what?

There are two answers, both anathema to party leaderships, but entitled to be raised by those on the moderate left who recognise the need to break the present tragic deadlock. The first answer is specific and short-term. It means support, subject to basic criteria of acceptability, for those candidates best placed to defeat the Conservative candidate at the approaching election. A tactical vote now is emphatically a positive vote.

The second answer is more speculative, longer term, but ultimately more important. It may look like a whistle in the wind now, but after the election (especially if Thatcher wins again) it is likely to become pressing and urgent. The reason for this is simple. There will be many people, especially in the Labour Party (including the Parliamentary Labour Party), who will not be prepared any longer to watch a centre left majority in the country, and the causes which it stands for, be frustrated by an obsolete party system and by the seemingly endemic disabilities of the Labour Party.

Such people will have three choices open to them (apart from the cultivation of their gardens). The first would involve a final attempt to carry through a fundamental and historic reconstruction of the Labour Party, both ideologically and organisationally. This would mean defining the kind of party it was (and was not), in terms of both ends and means. It would also mean a democratic revolution to enfranchise its membership at the expense of the block votes and the farcical federalism.

The second option would involve a 'second wave' movement into the SDP, with the aim of turning it into a *real* social democratic party. This is certainly a possibility, although too much bad blood has passed to make it an immediately inviting prospect (on either side), except perhaps as a last resort.

This leaves the third option. This would involve the formation of a new political grouping on the moderate left (called, say, the New Democrats, as in Canada). Unlike the SDP, whose bluff it would call, it would be firmly on the left. Unlike Labour, which would be left to find a Eurocommunist future on an uneasy cocktail of Designer Marxism, Old Labourism and sundry sectionalisms, it would not be a catch-all party which ends up catching ever less. This is an attractive option in many ways, but it is also the most precarious.

Much will depend upon the turn of events in the period ahead. However, it is already clear that two-party politics in Britain was an eccentric mid-century interlude, now propped up only by an absurd electoral system, and that it is time we recognised, like the rest of Europe, that a mature democracy requires an adequate range of organised political choice and the political machinery to match.

In case all this seems too speculative, or too defeatist, the answer is that doing nothing is no longer an option at all. If the first task is to try to save the election, the second task is to reconstruct the moderate left. British politics are on the move and a realigned left has been on the hidden agenda of British politics for a long time. The Social Democratic fracture from Labour was not it (though it may have realigned the centre). The real earthquake, transforming the political landscape, may at last be about to happen.

Anthony Wright

Anthony Wright is Senior Lecturer in Political Studies in the Department of Extramural Studies at the University of Birmingham. He is author of Socialisms: Theories and Practices (Oxford University Press, 1986), shortly to appear in paperback; and of R.H. Tawney, to be published by Manchester University Press later this year.

The Tory right: our agenda

MRS THATCHER is noted for spurning consensus. Certainly the old democratic consensus where the government of the day expediently gave in to the powerful interest groups has gone. *But beneath the rhetoric of mistrust for anyone who is not 'one of us' there are signs of a new consensus emerging. It is running through and beyond the Conservative Party in support of Thatcherite policies.*

Wets are concerned in a rather paternalistic way with helping the poorer sections of the community in order to ensure the social cohesiveness of 'one nation'. But they are increasingly accepting state intervention as the cause rather than the solution to such problems as Third World poverty, unemployment, bad housing and inner-city decay. In the past they felt that, to gain recognition as 'progressive' with a 'social conscience', it was necessary to insist that the state should 'do something'. Now all but the diehard wets are following a Thatcherite agenda.

Where, however, many commentators (including those associated with *Marxism Today*) miss the point is in seeing Thatcherism as ideologically innovative. All the main strands of right-wing thought which are now labelled 'new right' were in place by the mid-1960s.

What was new in 1979 were the singularly favourable conditions for the implementation of new right ideas, heralded by the crises of social democracy, and the election of a prime minister uniquely suited to implement these ideas.

A further catalyst for Thatcherism has been the rise of a new left in the Labour Party, treating local councils like surrogate student unions. Left-wing militancy has made it harder for Conservatives to fudge issues like trade unions and local

government. Even under the leadership of Horace Cutler in the late 1970s, there were a few Conservatives who argued for the abolition of the GLC on the grounds that it was a superfluous tier of government. The balance of opinion in the Conservative Party towards abolition was only swung decisively after Ken Livingstone ousted Andrew McIntosh to be the new GLC leader and begin his new left crusade in 1981.

Newspapers — notably the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* — act as repositories of popular consciousness dancing a tango with vocal Tory backbenchers. When left-wing councillors engage in activities like forcing primary school boys and girls to put on each others' clothes as part of an exercise against sex stereotyping, they were not merely setting an agenda for the left but for the right as well.

Housing Minister John Patten is not 'one of us', yet his plans to privatise council estates will strike at the dependence culture on which the Labour Party has thrived. Council tenants would be able to vote to form themselves into tenants' co-operatives or housing associations.

Education Secretary Kenneth Baker is not 'one of us' either, yet his proposals will rival those of Patten's as being the most radically Thatcherite of the third term. The voucher may be dead, but plans for per capita funding with more parents on governing bodies and headmasters holding executive powers will provide much the same effect. The amount of money a school has will be determined by the number of pupils it attracts — bad schools will close, good schools expand.

The adoption of these proposals represents a victory for the 'No Turning Back' group of backbench Tory MPs, many of whose members are graduates of St Andrew's University. Baker's special adviser, Tony Kerpel has been an ally of the moves towards greater parent power — despite an earlier incarnation as Chairman of the Young Conservatives. Pressure in the same direction has also come from Professor Roger Scruton's Hillgate Group.

The largest privatisation measure so far, British Gas, was the responsibility of leading Cabinet wet, Energy Secretary Peter Walker. On inner cities, Michael Heseltine's urban development corporations have swept away bureaucratic regulations, forced councils to sell land and lifted the rates burden. Most of the infrastructure in Docklands has been financed through private capital on a commercial basis. And Heseltine's proposals for 'workfare' as a way to reduce unemployment are more Thatcherite than anything proposed by Employment Secretary Lord Young.

All of these ministers have opted for free market solutions on an empirical rather than ideological basis. John Wheeler MP, a former prison governor, advocates privatisation of prisons because he has seen it works better when tried out in the USA — not because he has read Hayek, Friedman or Ludwig von Mises.

Rising ministerial stars John Moore and Michael Spicer, and high-flying backbenchers Peter Lilley and Alan Howarth, are among those converted to Thatcherism. All have past wet credentials. Moore supported the Democratic Party in the USA, was student union president at LSE and worked in Conservative Central Office during the Heath era. Spicer helped form the Tory

Reform Group. Howarth headed the Conservative Research Department and Lilley the Bow Group when both bodies were still predominantly Heathite.

Ironically, many on the 'social market' Owenite wing of the SDP are more receptive to free market ideas than the diehard wets. There is a radical break between the remnants of the Tory paternalist left, like Sir Ian Gilmour, with their splenetic attacks on market economics, and the new generation of free-thinking SDP policy makers, such as David Owen's chief economics adviser Alex de Mont, who have a pragmatic regard for the efficacy of marketplace solutions. It must be galling for former Tory student leaders who joined the SDP in the early 1980s to escape ideas such as student loans and voluntary membership of student unions, to see such concepts now gaining currency with the SDP students.

Social democratic parties round the world are now imitating Mrs Thatcher's privatisation initiatives: the SDP will have to move in the same direction, however much of a damper old-style politicians like Shirley Williams and William Rodgers attempt to be on David Owen. As for the Labour Party, state socialism is an albatross round its neck, yet it is inconceivable that it could be jettisoned to the extent necessary to make the party electable once more.

For these reasons, the realignments that will actually shape the future of British politics will be those of the right rather than of the left.

Harry Phibbs

Harry Phibbs is a former editor of the Federation of Conservative Students' magazine New Agenda and is the editor-to-be of a new magazine, New Right.

The centre: for fluidity

A BIZARRE new form of tactical voting has recently won support in the press — vote Conservative for an Alliance victory. Respected columnists, like Peter Jenkins of the *Independent* and Geoffrey Smith of *The Times*, joined maverick former social democrats, like Neville Sandelson and Brian Walden, to suggest that the best result for the SDP and the Liberals would be for Mrs Thatcher to win a third overall majority. They argue that such a victory would be a mortal blow for Labour while at the same time obviating the need for the Alliance to make difficult choices in a balanced Parliament. It would therefore remove all barriers to the emergence of the Alliance as Britain's main centre left force.

This theory is, however, based on one major false assumption — that the aim of the SDP and the Liberal Party is simply to replace the Labour Party as the major challenger to the Conservatives inside a two-party system. Yet for a considerable group in both Alliance parties this is not the objective at all.

Many SDP members see their party, rather, as the first step in a major realignment of British politics. The result of such a realignment should not be a mere change in political labels, it should be a revolution in the way that politics is conducted. Sterile 'left-right' clashes should be replaced by a



John Minnion

rich political debate reflecting a much wider variety of political views and interests. Squabbling broad-church parties should give way to narrower parties who can express the differences between them honestly and compromise openly.

This is a vision shared by a large number of Liberals — it unites Michael Meadowcroft and David Owen. It is also a vision that demands either an Alliance victory or a balanced Parliament after the next election.

The current shape of British politics is determined by the electoral system. The system offers electoral success only to parties with a concentrated class or regional base. It strongly encourages two-party contests. To reject two-party, class-based politics is to risk electoral annihilation. There are few prepared to take such a risk.

Realignment of the type that many Alliance supporters want is, therefore, impossible without electoral reform to offer political survival to a wide variety of political labels. The danger of a Conservative victory is that it will delay electoral reform. As a consequence the great opportunity presented by the Alliance, and by the greater fluidity of current British politics, may be lost.

A third Conservative victory will increase the pressure for the two Alliance parties to merge. At present, the Alliance remains both open and capable of accommodating diverse views. Individuals inside it can play different roles in any realignment following electoral reform. A merged Alliance would lose much of this flexibility. It would become a part of the two-party system; vying with Labour to be the most popular progressive broad church, unwieldy and possibly unworkable.

Too many who desire realignment have been more concerned with predicting possible new groupings than with finding ways of bringing them about. Yet waiting for John Smith and Roy Hattersley to produce a political revolution seems a most unpromising strategy.

The exact shape of post-realignment politics is, in any case, impossible to predict. Whether or not, for example, the Greens will align with members of the Liberals and the Labour Party depends on personalities and on timing.

Those who want realignment should concentrate, instead, on gaining electoral reform as soon as possible. They should support the Alliance making a deal with any party that, among

other things, offers progress towards electoral reform. That party may be the Conservatives. So be it. 'That', as David Owen said in a recent interview, 'is a matter for Mr Kinnock'.

Danny Finkelstein

Danny Finkelstein is Alliance candidate for Brent East and a member of the SDP National Committee.

The new left: a Liberal catalyst

AS WE APPROACH the general election the mood on the left is one of disarray. The Labour Party is intellectually redundant and seemingly in terminal decline, the Alliance has not fulfilled its early promise of being a vehicle for a realignment of the left. The formation of the Alliance was the first serious challenge to labourism for 50 years. It has opened up the possibility for a realignment of the radical left after the next election.

Should Thatcher win a third term, the internal recriminations in the Labour Party will be enormous. As the left blames the right for not standing on a truly socialist programme, so the right will blame the left for fighting on a pro-CND, pro-gay, pro-black and pro-feminist platform. It will be open warfare. The Alliance will itself be in a state of flux, as moves by the Liberal leadership for a merger will gather pace. But a move to

integrate the structure will be at the cost of accepting mediocrity, appeasement and the denial of fundamental Liberal rallying points.

The Liberal Party must not fall into this trap. What Liberals and other movements on the left need to accept is that only a complete break with capitalism can bring about a participatory, democratic and liberated society. Social Democracy is incompatible with these objectives.

Liberals do not want social democrats still in the Labour Party, like John Smith or John Cunningham, to join what the press have called a 'tri-party alliance', a mark II Wilson party. Britain doesn't need a stronger social democratic party marginalising the radical left. We must not move towards the dominant European trend of politics, where centre-right or right-wing governments are regularly elected, PR or first-past-the-post making little difference.

There is a ready alternative to social democracy: it is now offered by most Liberals, some pressure groups, some in the SDP, the Green movement and some parts of the Labour Party. At the Young Liberal Conference this Easter I called for a 'Rainbow Alliance' of the left. In reality this is the radical realignment of the left that has been craved for the past 20 years.

That sort of grouping could offer an approach based on an enabling philosophy that puts democracy at its centre. It can coalesce around notions of participation, community, human liberation and freedom. A grouping that is not made up of personalities but, like the German

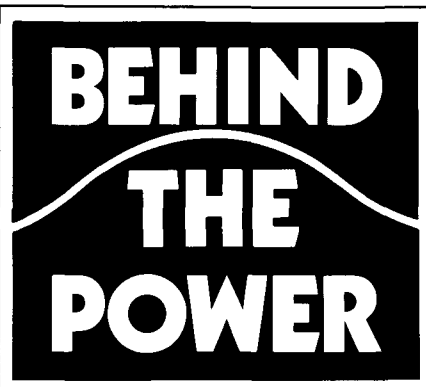
Greens, is constructed from the grassroots upwards, encompassing both a parliamentary and an extra-parliamentary wing. Thus it would recognise that most reforms in this country have come about from people taking power into their own hands. Groups such as the Diggers, Levellers, Chartists and Suffragettes are now mirrored by those in the pressure groups, the women's, peace and green movements.

There is a new agenda to be written by a radical grouping on the left. The control and ownership of society by the rich must be challenged through the creation of co-operatives, questioning the ownership of land, a social wage and a restructuring and sharing out of work. This agenda is about releasing the talents and powers of all individuals for the common good.

I believe that the Young Liberals and the Liberal Party can be a catalyst and the focus for a realignment of the radicals on the left. Working to elect Liberal MPs is our priority for the coming general election; but for a growing number of people in all or none of the political parties the real struggle will begin *after* polling day. Like the greatest battles in politics, the campaign for a radical realignment of the left is about beliefs first, then power. Because they have neglected the former, Kinnock, Owen and Steel may be unlikely to obtain the latter.

Felix Dodds

Felix Dodds was until last month chair of the National League of Young Liberals.



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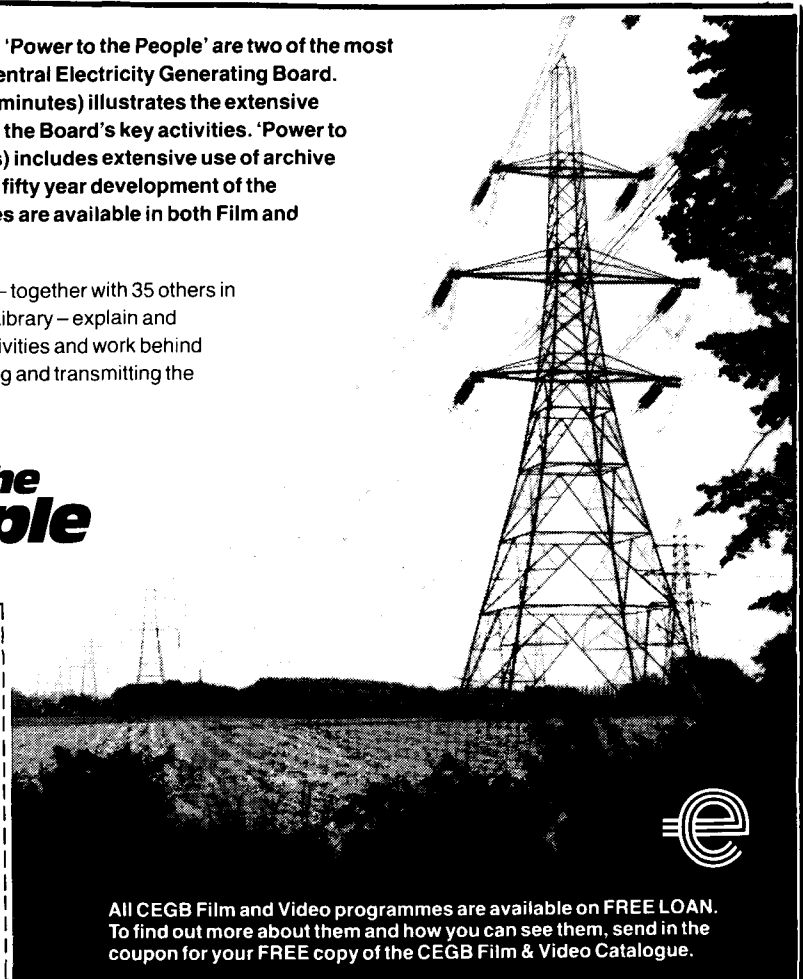
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3. Policing: a power in the land

ACPO, the Chief Constables' trade union, rose to public prominence during the miners' strike, and created new fears about the establishment of a national police force. But in the third Secret Society enquiry, DUNCAN CAMPBELL found that ACPO's real function was to preserve police chiefs' freedom from accountability

THE BALANCE between law and order and civil rights has, since 1979, shifted decisively towards greater authoritarianism. A significant part of the shift has resulted from the work of a wholly extra-constitutional body, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Now loudly political — calling, for example, for the abolition of the right to silence, the curtailment of jury trials and greater control of juries — ACPO has for a decade had a central role in determining policing policy on matters of important public interest. Yet it is profoundly undemocratic. Its affairs are effectively in the hands of a self-perpetuating elite, who will seldom recognise masters either in central or local government, and who have not infrequently been accused of being unaccountable even to most of their own 280 members.

ACPO has not always had its own way in demanding new police powers, or in rejecting unwelcome new duties. But Home Office and government have still repeatedly found themselves operating to the Chief Police officers' agenda. The normal constitutional relationship has been reversed even to the extent that Ministers have suggested that it is the duty of government and Parliament to produce what the police want — not the other way round. Two years ago, junior Home Office minister Giles Shaw summed up the relationship between the Association and the government with the comment that 'You, the Chief Constables, are not slow to tell us if we are getting it wrong. And that is as it should be.'

ACPO, founded in 1948 from earlier Chief Constables' clubs, provides ambitious Chief Constables with the opportunity to play a prominent national political role. The Association also carries out orthodox trade union functions such as negotiating pay and conditions. All ACPO's deliberations, decisions and documents are kept confidential. Despite an annual government subsidy approaching £200,000, its leadership recognise no obligation to discuss their affairs with outsiders of any persuasion. The current President of ACPO is the noisiest and most iconoclastic of all police chiefs, Greater Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton,

who is no more restrained in commenting about ACPO's operations than in his other pronouncements. He told me that 'We are accountable, I suppose, essentially to ourselves'.

No national force

Despite fears during the miners' strike that the ACPO-run National Reporting Centre was the preliminary to national integration of the police service, ACPO itself is emphatically neither an embryo national police force nor a prototype for such a development. With a few exceptions among the very ambitious, ACPO's membership doesn't want a national police force any more than the left or libertarians — but for quite different reasons.

The left doesn't want a national police force because of fears of the potentially repressive power it would place in the hands of national government, and the expected lack of accountability. But senior police officers see ACPO as protecting them from accountability to central government, while retaining their existing independence of local government control. It gives them the power and access they need and want nationally, without the control (either local or central) thus entailed. They seek the accoutrements of a national and centralised police force — but without having to endure administration from above, which would deprive each of ACPO's 43 Chief Constables of their much prized 'local autonomy' on their own patches.

ACPO's prime job, one Metropolitan Police member of ACPO told me, is 'to keep the politicians away from the police'. One of ACPO's most prominent members, the former Devon and Cornwall Chief Constable John Alderson, says:

The vast majority of Chief Constables wouldn't want a National Police Force . . . I think there is an awareness that a National Police Force will lead to a greater control of Chief Officers of Police [by politicians].

At present, Alderson noted, 'they haven't had to put up with a bureaucracy which is higher in the pecking order than themselves'. ACPO's position was also made quite plain to the 1979 Inquiry on the Police conducted by Lord Justice Edmund Davies. The judge observed that:

The Associations (ACPO and ACPOS, the Scottish equivalent) have made it clear that they would prefer to forego statutory recognition rather than accept regulation.

As things stand, Chief Constables are literally a law unto themselves as to how they deploy their forces. 'A chief constable', Lord Denning asserted in a key case, 'is not a servant of anyone save the law itself. No Minister of the Crown can tell him that he must, or must not, keep observation on this place or that . . . nor can any police authority tell him so.' Democratic reforms of local government

police committees would threaten one aspect of this autonomy; but a national police force would threaten the other. Falling between these two stools, Chief Constables stay free.

Strong influence

ACPO President Anderton refused to provide *Secret Society* with a copy of their rulebook, although it hardly ranks high in the list of the nation's secrets. But a little help from ACPO moles yielded the document, which specifies three objectives for the Association's operations. Two of these are the normal work of a trade union — negotiating pay and conditions, and protecting the 'individual and collective interests' and 'social amenities' of members. The third function, loosely framed, covers ACPO's real national role — to 'promote the welfare and efficiency of the police service, to provide opportunities for discussion, and to give advice on matters affecting the service'. But does ACPO just give advice, or does it actually make the policy?

The Home Office has made no secret of the fact that it has been strongly influenced by ACPO, as Giles Shaw's comment indicated. On such matters as public order, drugs, weapons, and police powers, policy is frequently decided by ACPO and then rubber-stamped by the Home Office. But if battle lines are drawn on a policy issue between a government (of any party) and the police chiefs, they are now adept at presenting and winning their case through the media and other channels. Brian Hilliard, a former Special Patrol Group inspector who now edits the independent *Police Review*, says that:

If 43 Chief Constables won't do, or don't want to do, what the Home Office want them to do, the Chief Constables will win.

Former Chief Constable John Alderson concurred with Hilliard that 'if ACPO wished to be opposed to a central government it would be able to do so up to a very high point.' Only bringing ACPO into a statutory framework could remedy the situation.

ACPO's direct and public involvement in politics began in the mid-1970s, led in part by the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner Robert Mark. After his retirement, Mark claimed that the views of the police could be 'safely disregarded' by any government if they did not accord with ministerial wishes — since the legislators could rely on the 'traditional silence' of the police. But Robert Mark was the last person about whom such a claim might have been true.

Indeed, in another memoir, Mark boasted how he and ACPO took on the last Labour government and Employment Secretary Michael Foot about the proposed reform of picketing laws. ACPO hated Foot's plan. So from their Scotland Yard headquarters, ACPO sent telexes to each Chief

Constable, urging them all to protest loudly and publicly. ACPO won the day; the bill was killed. Their success inspired the Chief Constables' lobby to take action often again; soon afterwards they wrote a well publicised letter to Home Secretary Merlyn Rees claiming that planned reductions in police budgets could lead to 'a breakdown in law and order'. Rees reconsidered his plans.

On any political issue of importance, according to John Alderson, 'there would be an ACPO party line — which was usually thrashed out at the Chief Constables' Council meeting'. Then, 'from time to time':

The ACPO Office at the behest of the President would send out telex messages to all Chief Constables advising them of the ACPO policy . . . and asking them not to go against it.

We had experience of ACPO's discipline of its own elite membership while making *Secret Society*, with the assistance of ACPO members. ACPO discussed the programme at a special meeting. Later, ACPO officers argued that if a certain serving Chief Constable, who had contributed substantially to the debate on police accountability, were to appear instead of ACPO's approved choice, co-operation might be withdrawn. (In the end, neither appeared.)

Self-selecting

ACPO's rules make it clear that the Association's ruling body, a seven-member Executive Committee, is virtually self-selecting. The executive committee comprises the President and Vice-President, the past President, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the General Secretary, an Honorary Treasurer, plus a single elected representative of the 'other ranks', the Assistant Chief Constables (and Commanders of the Metropolitan Police).

Officially, all these posts are elective. In practice, new members of the Executive Committee are nominated by the Committee itself. There is usually a single nomination, and no time is wasted on secret ballots or other democratic frivolities, however much these may find official favour in other trade unions. Once nominated as Vice-President, the appointee expects then to be elected, unopposed, as the next year's ACPO President. The current President, James Anderton, does not disagree that this is

ACPO's way; 'invariably, that is done'.

The ACPO structure, and the influence it wields across the range of police appointments and policy act as a formidable force for conformity in a body of men (there are no women in the very top echelon of ACPO) not often noted for their progressive views. 'Assistant Chief Constables within ACPO know that their future depends on the favour of the 20 men in power above them,' says Brian Hilliard, and 'they'd be very unwise if they went out of their way to upset them or upset any of their friends.'

ACPO's structure is seen as effectively stifling not just any rare flowers of police radicalism (although John Alderson has been an industrious exception of sorts), but also in restricting the range of innovative ideas of any kind which younger officers might bring to policing. For the average Assistant Chief Constable, says Hilliard, 'the eventual destination hopefully is Chief Constable':

They haven't got to Assistant Chief Constable by rocking the boat, and once they're in ACPO, they're not going to rock any boats at all. They're getting there by being conventional . . .

Although it has no statutory existence, ACPO dominates a quasi-official body called the Central Conference of Chief Constables. The Central Conference is a forum in which Home Office civil servants meet with the ACPO hierarchy twice a year to discuss 'issues of current concern to the police service'. The Conference is chaired by the Permanent Secretary to the Home Office, Sir Brian Cubben.

What's discussed at the Conference is officially secret, and secret even from most of ACPO, according to past and present members. Deputy Chief Constables might see the minutes, I was told, but they would go no further down the ranks. The papers presented are not shown to local authorities, despite the official theory that policing in Britain is a 'tripartite' responsibility between the police, and local and central government. Local authority Police Committees are unrepresented at the Central Conference, although a separate 'tripartite' conference is held by ACPO every summer to give some semblance of consultation to the policy-making process. The lack of local authority involvement in the main conference means that police policy-making is confined to a confidential conclave of a few Chief Constables and civil servants.

Secret success

ACPO's determined secrecy about its activities has earned criticism from every quarter, including all other ranks of the police service. This issue came to the fore in the Orgreave riot trial, when defence lawyers forced ACPO members to produce the now notorious 'Public Order Manual'. The Police Federation, representing ordinary police officers, loudly attacked ACPO for 'quite absurd, not to say arrogant secrecy . . . over the contents of the manual'. The Federation paper, *Police*, pointed out that although instructions in the manual had been alleged to incite ordinary PCs on riot duty to possible illegal assault themselves, the contents of the manual were never discussed with the Federation. The Federation commented that:

ACPO has managed to make itself look ridiculous

and sinister at one and the same time.

In developing the public order tactics in the manual, ACPO laid down policing policy in a very sensitive area without asking anyone else, senior police officers included. Yet the manual contravenes the Home Office's own recommendations — and the doctrine of the courts — on the minimum use of force by the police.

The feeling that the ACPO tail is wagging the Home Office dog remains hard to dispell. For example, ACPO continues to maintain that Chief Constables acted autonomously in using roadblocks to inhibit pickets reaching the main coalfields during the miners' strike; that the novel and almost uniformly applied roadblock policy was a result of unco-ordinated spontaneous local application of Chief Constables' 'operational autonomy'. The ACPO view is not convincing. Similarly, ACPO claims that no Chief Constable was ever given orders to produce their local tithe of Police Support Units for the National Reporting Centre to deploy against the miners. But talk to the middle ranks of some police forces, and there's no shortage of stories about the pressure applied to recalcitrant Chief Constables to toe the ACPO party line on putting PSUs where ACPO wanted them.

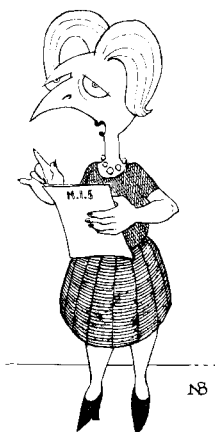
An ACPO campaign to restrict the right to jury trial, and the rights of jurors, has long roots. In 1965, for example, ACPO informed the Morris Committee on juries that the partial removal of a property-owning qualification for jury service had been in their view 'detrimental to the quality of person serving on juries'. ACPO lost that one; but has now won an increasing restriction on the right to jury trial, the introduction (and perhaps extension) of the use of majority verdicts; and the abolition of defence 'peremptory challenges' to individual jurors.

After observing ACPO from the inside, critics like John Alderson fear that ACPO's erstwhile low profile has led to an underestimate of its importance:

I think at the present time nobody quite understands the nature of the power, or the potential power, of ACPO in the political sense . . . there's a vacuum in the constitutional arrangements for our policing system.

But ACPO alone is not responsible for the vacuum, or the mess it can create. There are many junior and senior police officers unhappy with the political role that the present government has thrust on the police. It also clearly suits some politicians' purposes to shuffle responsibilities for resolving political conflicts off onto the shoulders of the police. When police operations become embarrassing — and the Special Branch raid on BBC Scotland over *Secret Society* itself is a very apposite example — then police autonomy provides a happy opportunity for Ministers to evade political responsibility for the odium that results. IF ACPO are to be blamed for moving too far into the political arena, they can properly point to a string of politicians, Labour and Conservative, who left the doors open and threw away the keys. □

Next week: Changes in the BBC2 Secret Society schedule means that the episode on the failures of Britain's radar and air defence system has been switched to next week (Wednesday 13 May, 10.20pm). The accompanying New Statesman article will appear in next week's issue.



'The following statement is true throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland from midnight tonight until further notice'

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*Sir Donald Barron,
who handed over to Sir Kit McMahon at the
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Pre-tax profits rose from £351m to £434m.

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Dividend increased from 25.5p to 27p.

For a copy of the Annual Report write to the Secretary, Midland Bank plc, Poultry, London EC2P 2BX.



Midland Bank Group

No news on Saturday

Mike Molloy

A FEW YEARS ago, I was in the offices of the *People's Daily* in Peking. My companion asked the night editor what story they were splashing on the next day's edition. He said that the Yellow River had flooded and several million people had either died or been made homeless. I was half out of my chair and looking around for a telephone.

'When did this happen?' we chorused.

'Two years ago', he replied, 'but we did not wish to distress people until now. You see, most of the damage done has been repaired.'

I sank back into my chair and pointed out that in Britain this would not be considered a news story. He looked puzzled. 'News is something that people don't know,' he said finally.

The anecdote illuminates two facts about *News on Sunday*. First, it is a brave title. Second it presents the staff with massive difficulties. The problem is the stance they've taken, which is encapsulated in the title. For promotional purposes it's a marketing man's dream. No frivolous nonsense about runaway vicars and teenage vice scandals. Just the facts, ma'am, delivered in the staccato bark of an alternative comedian. Great for TV advertisements and bold slogans in the trade press *but hard to follow up in the actual publication*.

Now the glorious days of planning have come to an end and the declaration of intent is nailed to the Editor's door. The task of actually producing the bloody paper has to be tackled. The chattering gang of policy makers pass on and the staff who actually do the work take over. So what are they left with? A set of guidelines which are about as much use as the manifesto of the Monster Raving Loony Party. For a terrible truth now has to be faced. An open secret that is shared by all of us who toil in the pleasant pastures of Sunday journalism: **THERE ISN'T MUCH NEWS ON SATURDAY**. Therefore, a Sunday paper that sells itself to the public on a ticket of news is heading for heartache.

It began to show in the first issue. They had to venture as far as Brazil to find a man who was so hard up he was prepared to sell one of his kidneys. Not a bad story. Lord Northcliffe would have been delighted to print it and the *National Enquirer* is no doubt planning a follow-up.

Don't blame the journalist: in my experience they are able to cope with any publication providing they are given the plot. Disasters occur when those in charge hope that a newspaper will emerge, like an anarchist manifesto.

Blame the chat-show intellectuals who know they can get a round of applause every time they attack Samantha Fox. Sadly, we now know them well, for they are against poverty, racialism, bingo and rape. And they demand a newspaper that doesn't shilly-shally about these issues. When it is pointed out that (with the honorable

exception of bingo) only a few mentally disturbed people are in favour of poverty, racialism, and rape, they laugh in a hollow fashion and roll their eyes to the ceiling.

IT IS THE common attitude of the invincibly ignorant who have infested the Labour Party in the past 15 years and are only now being doused with pesticide by Neil Kinnock. In their carnal lust for power they have created some interesting myths about the working classes and the papers that they buy. You may be familiar with the arguments.

The first is that the proles have been traduced by a cunning ruling class who have kept them ill-fed, badly housed, uneducated and supine on a diet of pop culture. So that explains why four million of them buy the *Sun*.

The second argument is that the *Daily Mirror* does not really support the Labour Party. The simple fact that the *Mirror* has campaigned for every decent piece of enlightened legislation that has gone on the statute books for the past 45 years and urged its readers to vote Labour at every election is an embarrassing truth that takes all of the bizarre sophistry of the late Lord Stansgate's son and heir to deal with.

These myths have been easy to put about in the Labour Party because of the guilt much of the leadership felt about born into the middle classes. This attitude allowed some truly vile working-class people to bully their way around the party by wearing their origins like decorations of valour and the nonsense they talked about the popular press was listened to with reverence.

The hatred they bear for Neil Kinnock is easy to understand. The son of a coal miner who is married to the daughter of a railway signalman can become a little testy when lectured about working-class values.

“In their carnal lust for power they have created some interesting myths”

Just as the working classes can be a little testy when they think they are being patronised. Twice this century British armies have been raised from some of the worst slums in Europe. Women endured terrible deprivations while their men fought savage wars because they believed their country was right. Such people are not mindless proles. In fact they're extremely bloody-minded.

A lot of working class Tories buy the *Mirror* and a lot of Labour voters buy the *Sun*, a perversity which is difficult for the editors of both papers to explain. The *News on Sunday* says it will produce a paper for the ordinary men and women with the values that are inherent in the title. I wish them well, but I would humbly like to offer the following piece of information. For the past year I have been editing the *Sunday Mirror*. In that time there has not been one major news story break on a Saturday.

So if you wait for news on Saturday you will end up with painfully boring speculation or mindless trivia. Not a good mixture for any paper, regardless of its search for identity. □

Short and the long term

CLARE SHORT clearly didn't relish the harsh spotlight of publicity which shone upon her this week, after she had agreed to chair a campaign for the reinstatement of Sharon Atkin as a parliamentary candidate.

She had, it seemed, chosen the hot seat at a private meeting in Birmingham on Sunday without thinking through the huge publicity the right-wing press would give it — followed, shockingly for news values, by the bank-holiday, news-starved BBC, which put this relatively insignificant piece of news at the top of its bulletins for much of the day.

Ironical, too, that she did so just as it became known (*Independent*, 4 May) that the government would stamp out its racial ticket for the election by claiming that Labour's and the Alliance's likely opposition to its Immigration (Carriers) Bill — designed to stop Tamil refugees — 'risks flooding the country'. For where Short has been at her most effective is in her constant and principled opposition to racism in immigration and in society. By her latest manoeuvre, she risks compromising at least some of that effectiveness.

Her move also illuminated the warring demands of principle, expediency and principle in the breast of a woman who thinks the Campaign Group (of which she is a member) too dry and Tribune too wet. Two prominent leftists among her colleagues agreed that her decision had much to do with an effort to retain 'street credibility', and that she had at least half an eye on the national executive elections: one pointed to her famous 'page three' Private members' Bill as being in the same category.

As a front bench (her subject is employment, on which she is knowledgeable: she was a high-profile director of Youth Aid 1976-78) she inherited responsibilities which still, evidently, sit uneasily with a naturally anti-leadership temperament: an earlier cause (October 1979) was an attack on the Labour leader's powers of patronage. Her hurried assurances to a splenetic Neil Kinnock that the campaign she would chair would be low-profile has papered over the divide, but probably pleased no one on either side of it. For all that, the black sections' activists have gained a considerable prize in her support.

In her other favourite cause, Irish unity, she has had some success, helping to shove the party policy more in the direction of a commitment to unify under a Labour government than her leader wanted. Her Irish republican stock — born in Birmingham, in the Ladywood constituency she now represents — makes her among the fiercest of Labour's all-Islanders, scornful of any argument which recognises Protestant fears or wishes for a separate and different nationhood.

She is likely to be an inactive chair of the reinstate Sharon Atkin campaign in the short term. In the longer term, she will be fascinating to watch for a resolution of the struggle between responsibility and the chance of power, and rebelliousness and the chance of another kind of power. ●

'Only for the US government'

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS at
the Iran contra inquiry

Washington

THE SENATE caucus room, hallowed by the memory of the Watergate hearings, is actually a rather dingy setting for drama. A large jury of middle-aged men (only one of them black) faces the witness chair, which has its back to the audience for the convenience of the television cameras. Questioning is boring, cautious and respectful.

Nonetheless, retired Major General Richard Vernon Secord insists on blurring out the one thing that the Reagan Administration does not want to hear:

We believed very much in the significance of what we were doing and that our conduct was in furtherance of the President's policies. I also understood that this Administration knew of my conduct and approved it . . . I have a great deal of respect for Admiral Poindexter and Lt Col. North. They are both dedicated and honest men who in my view tried diligently and conscientiously to carry out the policies of the President in an appropriate manner.

Secord's record is that of America's leading soldier in the field of counter-revolution. He flew hundreds of combat missions in Vietnam. He practically organised the secret war in Laos. In 1975 he was despatched by the Pentagon to take charge of training and equipping the Shah's air force — a stint which reaped him valuable contacts in the Middle East arms trade.

After that he became head of sales and procurement for the Defense Department. And these are just the jobs we know he had. Not the sort of man to take orders from a lieutenant colonel, or even an admiral, unless he had good assurance that those officers were acting with the authority of the President himself.

In 1972 Major General Secord wrote a master's thesis for the Naval War College, entitled 'Unconventional warfare: covert operations as an instrument of United States foreign policy'. In this dissertation, he wrote that 'bureaucratic obstacles should be dismissed out of hand', and argued that

those who planned covert war should prepare to circumvent 'the press, Congress, academia and others'. He also proposed that a high-level agency, 'probably the National Security Council', should be given the command of such secret wars and private foreign policies. This blueprint for the present crisis was being completed just as Richard Nixon was sinking into the ordure. Now its author has come to the scene of the Watergate hearings to tell us all about it. The fitness of this makes up for the unfitness of the surroundings.

EVERY DAY for the last seven days, the evidence has moved nearer and nearer the President. Witnesses and leakers have made it plain beyond doubt that Robert McFarlane knew what the invisible government was doing when he was National Security Advisor. Admiral Poindexter knew. Vice-President Bush knew. William Casey of the CIA knew. William Webster of the FBI knew. And who appointed all these people?

Not only did Ronald Reagan promote the larger fish, but he also took a keen and continuous interest in the smaller fry. Last week, Carl Channell entered the first 'guilty' plea so far, naming Oliver North as a co-conspirator. 'Guilty' in this case meant guilty of fooling around with the illegal contra funds. But how did Channell get his hands on the funds in the first place? Until last year, he was an obscure right-wing nut who ran a front for the John Birch Society. He got his step up by means of a warm letter of endorsement, empowering him to raise money for the contra cause. 'You and your organisation' read the letter, 'have made a remarkable contribution to the course of democracy in Central America.' The letter was dated October 10, 1985 and signed Ronald Reagan. Will the President now disown, or claim to forget, the man he plucked from a richly-deserved obscurity?

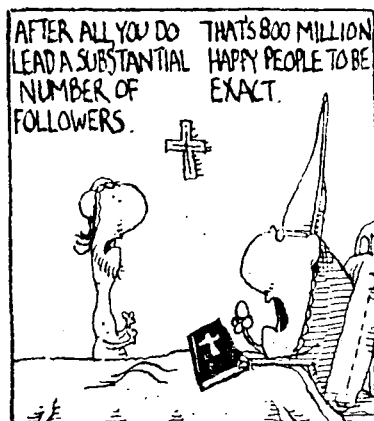
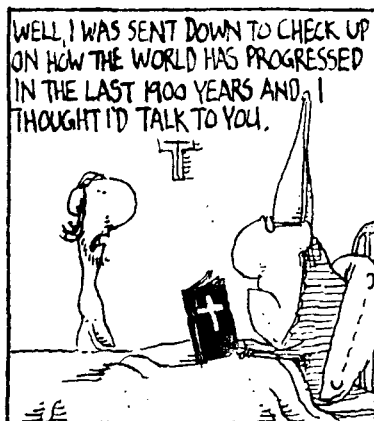
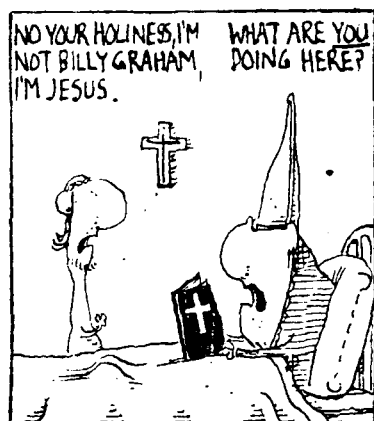
Maybe he will. But he will be hard-pressed to claim that he doesn't remember meeting David C. Fischer. Fischer was his personal assistant and acted as door-opener to the White House oval office. It has now emerged in evidence that he charged a retainer of \$20,000 per month to admit

rich donors to be photographed with the President. Rich donors to what? The coffers of the contras. Where did the retainer come from? Carl Channell. How did Channell get that kind of money? Because he had the President's fundraising franchise. And people are still asking whether Reagan 'knew'.

IT IS REALLY inspiring, for one brought up under the cloak of British secrecy, to see a Congressional inquiry in progress. Dull and pompous the proceedings may be, but the evidence accumulates at a steady rate and there is a pleasingly relentless air about the business. Nonetheless, there are moments when one yearns for the atmosphere of Prime Minister's Question Time. During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln successfully fought off a proposal that he and his ministers should appear before Congress to answer direct and sustained interrogation. A President can still not be compelled to appear on Capitol Hill. But he can be invited to do so, and if Reagan was invited it would take no more than half an hour to expose the centrality of his role in this web of funny money and weird extremism.

There was a moment of understated hilarity in the questioning of Major General Secord by Tom Nields, the undramatic lawyer for the special Congressional committee. He asked Secord whether he had ever been an arms dealer before, and received the unironic reply, 'only for the United States government'. He then asked how much Secord had expected to make out of his private arms dealing with Iran and the contras. Secord replied that he stood to make 'several hundred dollars' but had 'foresworn' the dough. When asked why he had foresworn such a sum, he answered that he was hoping by his work overseas, to get his passage back into government circles and did not want to give the appearance of a conflict of interest. In other words, the way to recruitment under Reagan was to take part in private wars and free-enterprise foreign policies. As columnist Michael Kingsley says, 'The scandal is not what's illegal — the scandal is what's legal.'

Last weekend Reagan made one of his most militant and extreme speeches to date about Nicaragua. Addressing an audience of newspaper publishers in New York, he announced his intention of seeking an expanded military aid budget for the contras. He closed by saying that 'I do not intend to leave such a crisis to the next American President'. This kind of rhetoric means, and is intended by the White House to mean, that if the contras wither then the Marines will be sent in. Even as Congress is beginning to peer at the mess and squalor of the covert Nicaragua policy, Reagan is upping the ante on the overt one. □





What are the odds your car will vanish tonight?

There's an old saying: 'You never appreciate what you've got till it's gone.'

The truth of it is never more keenly felt than when you stare, in disbelief, at the empty space where you last saw your car.

As Government statistics clearly show, theft is becoming more likely all the time. Over one and a half million cars are stolen or broken into every year. Four thousand every 24 hours.

So acute is the problem that in November 1985, the

Home Office called for 'A new generation of theft proof cars'*

As it happened, Ford were ahead of them. They had already developed a new high security locking system for the Granada. Since then it's been introduced on Escorts, Orions and Transit vans. And an even better system has been designed for the latest Sierras.

The locks themselves have rotating disc plates rather than conventional spring-loaded tumblers. This makes them highly



And what is Ford doing to reduce them?

resistant to picking – and less likely to freeze in winter.

The key designs, with a thousand permutations each, are almost impossible to copy. And if a thief did gain access to the car, it would only be to encounter a further obstacle. A very sophisticated steering lock.

One hundred percent theft proof? That would be a rash claim indeed. What is certain is that, faced with Ford's new locks, the smart thief would look for easier pickings elsewhere.

High security locking is part of the future; another example of Ford making the benefits of progress available to all. That's something they do better than anyone.

Could this be the key to their success?

*As reported in The London Standard November 20th, 1985.



Cars with a future.

'Even if it means challenging the Party'

MICK COSTELLO, the Morning Star's veteran industrial correspondent and a former industrial organiser of the Communist Party, is a lifelong supporter of the Soviet Union. Here, he gives his reaction to Mikhail Gorbachev and glasnost

'TAKE RISKS!' the roadside's three-foot high lettering shouted at me on my way recently from Moscow to the northeastern industrial city of Yaroslavl. Fortunately, the bus driver did not take this slogan of Gorbachev's new Russian 'revolution' literally. I was delivered, cold but whole, after five hours on the 155 miles of snow-swept road.

That slogan contains the essence of what is needed in the Soviet Union to modernise rapidly and meet the growing material needs of the population. It is an encouragement to people to innovate without waiting for orders from above. It is a call to challenge bureaucracy, corrupt party officials, arbitrary police and other negative elements in society; an appeal from the Communist Party leaders to the people to clean out the house they live in.

But the full conditions to ensure that 'taking the risk' is not too dangerous for those who stick their necks out have still to be created.

For some commentators the changes in the Soviet Union are confirmation of all that they have ever said about the USSR as a caste-ridden dictatorship. For others, especially the so-called Euro-Communists, it is evidence that their denigration of Soviet practices has now been recognised by Mikhail Gorbachev. But both forget the tremendous achievements of Soviet society and the fact that the new Soviet leaders come from within that society and its institutions.

Drives to reform and make socialism more efficient are not new. What is new is the scale of

today's reforms and the radically new way in which these are now being attempted. The immediate stimulus has been the dramatic fall in Soviet overseas earnings from the drop in oil prices, sharpened international competition promoted by the technological revolution, and an internal Soviet failure to innovate fast enough. There has been a resultant decline in productivity noted in the early 1980s.

In the West similar problems are tackled by sweeping millions out of the workplaces onto the dole and by state attacks on living standards, but that way of becoming 'efficient' is not one that the socialist society of the Soviet Union is contemplating.

Instead, efficiency is striven for by a refashioning of state, party, trade union and representative local and national government. This mammoth task is being carried out in the face of resistance from those with vested interests. To defeat them will require root and branch transformations, or *perestroika*, and an end to the elements of a command structure in Soviet life.

Winning the people for this is an enormous job, partly because the old ways have given them so much: full employment, virtually no inflation, cheap housing, gas and electricity, an incomparable education system and mass access to the arts and theatre. Now the government is having to tell them that all that is no longer guaranteed unless the country modernises: and, for that, greater popular and direct participation in decision-making is imperative.

MANY WITH important positions in the party, local and national government, the trade unions, ministries and other walks of life are threatened by the reforms. They are often still able to suppress those who would remove them in the name of efficiency and democracy. And the process of conviction, of demonstrating that living standards depend on greater democracy, has only just begun — and many workers remain sceptical.

A train guard cynically remarked to me that the whole business of *perestroika* was 'like a strong wind in the taiga forests — great movement at the top but peace and quiet reigning at ground level'. But, as a longstanding friend who works for the Soviet TUC put it to me bluntly: 'Unless this works, we are buggered.'

Today's needs require something very different from the old methods of barnstorming, mobilisation and compulsion. The Gordian Knot of red tape and growing indifference can only be cut by the sword of democratisation. *In the first instance, this must mean giving more real life to the trade unions and other mass organisations, even if this means they challenge the party on occasion.*

The gap between what is possible and a general failure to apply the best achievements was highlighted at the Soviet trade union congress last month. A worker from the Yaroslavl plant which pioneered synthetic rubber production in the

1930s spoke of archaic machinery in the plant today. The world's leading eye micro-surgeon, Svyatoslav Fyodorov, demanded to know why 90 per cent of his equipment had to be imported or fashioned in his hospital's own workshops. Analogous situations were described in other industries and services. There were bitter complaints about poor housing, transport, holiday facilities and poor pay differentials.

My visit to Yaroslavl exhibited in miniature many of the contrasts: beautifully restored main streets and monastery, with run-down backs; kindly hotel staff, but incredibly slow service; a modern bridge over the Volga linking roads lined with faceless blocks of flats and wooden cottages; people packed into public transport like Baltic sprats.

Yet there is an undoubted welcome for the economic reforms which allow earnings to be raised substantially, through locally-agreed productivity deals; for better quality control; for the government's crackdown on corruption and the shifting of many inefficient bosses.

IT IS BECAUSE the party machine itself has not been properly fulfilling its job as mobiliser and watchdog at many levels that its power to decide on everything is being ended. Control of appointments for all senior posts in management (the 'nomenklatura' system) has already been weakened by the extension of the electoral process with multiple-candidate contests.

The party's de facto ability to nullify the election process through its powers to insist that its 'recommended' nominee for a post should get the placement is being undermined by the *perestroika*. The removal of this patronage spells enormous hope for a greater flowering of democratic involvement of the people.

Mr Gorbachev and his supporters are having a tough fight to hold their corner within the party. But the Communist Party itself is finding it will have to accept that its constitutionally-enshrined 'leading role' can no longer mean the power to decide all contentious matters at all levels. The Party is having to return to the early days following the revolution of 1917, when it could carry the day only if it won conviction within the working class.

In that direction lies the only way to break the logjam of previous half-hearted reforms. It opens up the way for real independent power to organise, initiate and campaign to trade unions, local authorities, the youth and women's organisations, free from tutelage from party officialdom. In his address to the trade union congress Mr Gorbachev had to admit: 'Only the first steps have been taken. The essentials and the most difficult are still ahead. 1987 will be a decisive year in many ways.'

This coming July the party's leaders plan to review the party's own rules and constitution. A special conference of the party is scheduled for next year. The stakes are high. Let it be remembered that it was economic problems which were at the heart of political upheavals in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. When the Czech leadership attempted reforms similar in many ways to the *perestroika*, in 1968, the Soviet leaders of that time sent in the tanks.

The supporters of that way of doing things are still around today. The course on which the current Soviet leaders have set their sights can win through, provided they maintain their appeal to the rank and file of the working class, with no compromising with the bureaucrats. □

WHAT DO YOU READ?

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ARTS

ART

Malfunction

John Spurling

Temples and Tenements: the Indian drawings of Deanna Petherbridge

Fischer Fine Art, 30 King Street, SW1

John Carter

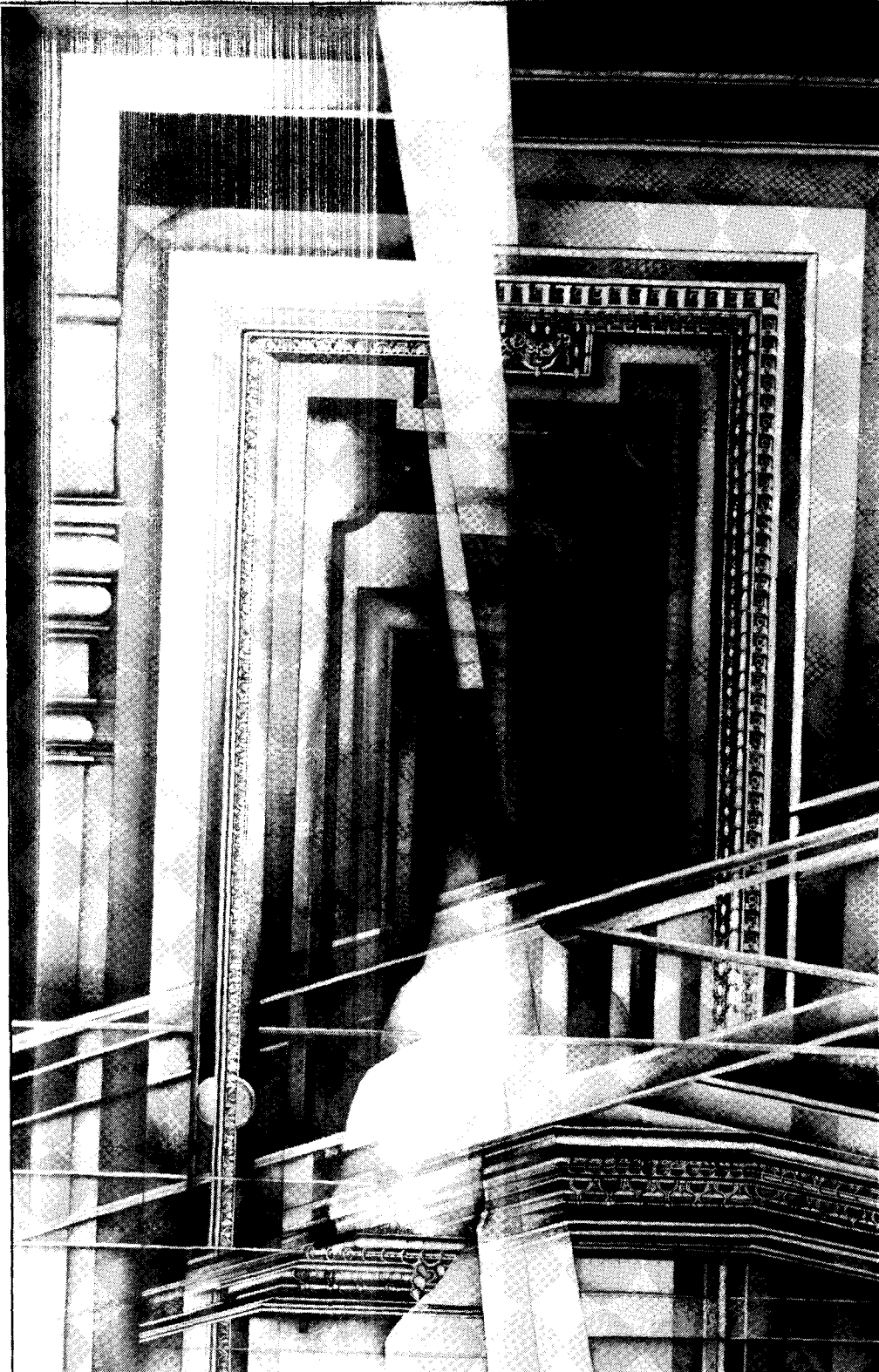
Nicola Jacobs Gallery, 9 Cork Street, W1

I MEANT TO DEVOTE this column to congratulating the Tate on its new Clore Gallery. Whatever one may think of the building — personally I like it — the interior space is good and so is the lighting. Turner's paintings are at last properly displayed and their full glory visible. The exact intentions behind his will can still be argued about, but I'm sure what he really wanted was to remain posthumously, as in his lifetime, the all-time top dog of British painting, and that's certainly the position his new exclusive wing of the Tate accords him.

However, my admiration for the Tate's role as the national collection of historic British art is always knocked sideways by my dissatisfaction with it as our national museum of contemporary art. The period of Turner's lifetime was a golden age of British art, but the last half century or so has been another and, if most people here and abroad are so far sadly unaware of it, that must be laid at the Tate's door. Only go and look at the latest work of Deanna Petherbridge and John Carter and you'll see what I mean. Both are now in their forties, both have been active and exhibiting in London for respectively 12 and 19 years, both are outstanding and original artists, neither is even represented in the Tate's collection. They are only the tip of an iceberg of talent which the Tate has failed to bring to public attention. What should one say to an institution which so neglects or mishandles one of its main functions? Congratulations, at least, on having caught up with Turner!

Like the great watercolourists of the Romantic period, **Deanna Petherbridge** is liable to be underrated because she sticks to drawing and because her basic subject — architecture — has not hitherto been ranked as much more than topography. In a long, formidably serious interview in the catalogue to her exhibition at Fischer's she remarks that 'for me architecture works as a rationalisation of the society it serves; a material manifestation of the social, religious and political structures and their interactions' and one glance at the large, incredibly precise, dense and weighty inventions on the walls is enough to establish that she is as intense and ambitious an artist as she is an interviewee.

The pen-and-ink drawings, mostly of temples, come out of a recent visit to India, but, although their detailed incidents may be drawn from real places, they are at least as much topographies of the mind, distant kin to Piranesi's imaginary



Why isn't this in the Tate? Deanna Petherbridge's 'Shakti Vijaynagara' (1985) from the Indian series

prisons. To compare them with Piranesi, however, is only to say that there aren't many obvious precedents for this kind of architectural drama: they share Piranesi's use of labyrinthine space to suggest enclosure, vertigo, bewilderment and, in some degree, human insignificance; they deploy also such Piranesian motifs as staircases, shafts of light, dark recesses and sudden elements of softness: dangling ropes or pieces of torn cloth.

But, whereas Piranesi's interiors, for all their ambiguities, are still and monumental, seen from one viewpoint, Petherbridge's are jumbled and jumpy, seen from several overlapping perspectives and at odd angles, as if the viewer were on the move and glancing this way and that. Again, his are all around you, hers are only just entered and the dark areas of depth are not so much permanent mysteries as places yet to be

penetrated and revealed. The essential difference is perhaps only that between prisons and temples, between being incarcerated somewhere with little hope of escape and freely entering somewhere that offers to lead you to another world. But there is also a historical difference: Piranesi lived in the Age of Reason, Petherbridge sees reason, clarity and wholeness transformed into obscurity, uncertainty and partiality.

Compared to some of her earlier work, however, suggesting mostly 20th-century materials — concrete and steel — and depicting nightmare topographies of aggression and defence, as in her extraordinary sequence of enormous battle drawings with Italian Renaissance affiliations, 'The Iron Siege of Pavia' (1975) and 'The Concrete Armada' (1978), these new works from India are remarkably optimistic

and even inviting. The hints of debris and ruin always present in the interstices of her meticulous masterly draughtsmanship now point to a world inhabited by humans instead of humanoid machines. Maybe that is simply the difference she has seen between Indian and European society, but I suspect it's also an important development in her own art and self-confidence.

It would be hard to say whether **John Carter** is primarily a painter or sculptor. His work is mostly three-dimensional, but it hangs on the wall and is painted. It's deceptively simple, variations chiefly on the straight edge and the sloping deviation, evenly washed in one or two clear colours. The latest work at Nicola Jacobs' is busier and more complex than before, but in its results rather than its means. Narrowing bands — like the strap-hinges on heavy doors — cross basically square or rectangular structures of plywood, the areas of junction being sometimes cut out to reveal the wall behind, sometimes picked out in a different colour. The colours are mostly pale blues and greens, a mixture of acrylic and marble powder rubbed down afterwards to give a cool, dusty, fresco effect. Strange, wavy, wombly things happen at these junctions, though the shapes themselves remain strictly geometrical. The impression is of a kind of scientific magic: coolness engendering heat which is soothed again by coolness; the laws of nature performing a little jig before resuming their stern outlines. □

CINEMA

Kookies crumble

Judith Williamson

Jumpin' Jack Flash
Odeon Marble Arch; Prince Charles; Cannons
Haymarket, Oxford Street
Hour of the Star
Everyman Hampstead

IN THE LAST YEAR or so the US media have been obsessed with the Single Working Woman. When a now-famous Harvard study was published supposedly proving that the chances of a woman over 30 getting married were practically nil, the press and TV news leapt into a frenzy of concerned interviews with SWWs and, after the initial shock horror, the next step was a series of interviews in every major magazine in which SWWs testified to their happiness with their state and the joys of being able to eat junk food in the middle of the night, go to bed with face cream on, etc.

This preoccupation surfaces in a number of contemporary mainstream US movies; in *Legal Eagles*, for example, Debra Winger plays a stereotypical SWW, the kind who compensates for being good at her profession by wearing slightly off-beat clothes, eating all night until she's sick, being a back-seat driver and getting nearly run over by a cab after refusing a male offer to put her in it.

Jumpin' Jack Flash offers Whoopi Goldberg the playpen of just such an SWW role. She plays

Terry Doolittle, a bright, funny SWW who, like the Winger character, tends to wear clothes in layers, braces, skirts with socks, legwarmer-type garb. This signification extends to the SWW's apartment, which is as whacky as her clothes and may contain such things as Mickey Mouse pillows and giant toothbrushes, expressive of the SWW's slightly un-grown-up personality. All these women form friendships with male colleagues and are almost one of the boys, but it is a *sine qua non* of their roles that they should be single — at least until the end of the film. *Jumpin' Jack Flash* neatly combines the two key elements of the SWW genre. Terry is presented as especially good at her job, a computer operator: she has a way with electronics, she's the one colleagues turn to when their computers don't work. And her whole persona hangs on her singleness, underlined by the fact that, for almost the entire film, her relationship to the male 'lead' is in fact a relationship to the computer screen on which they exchange messages. There is no room for an actual boyfriend within this representation of modern SWW autonomy.

The departure from traditional femininity is highlighted in one memorable scene where Terry crashes an embassy party dressed as a Diana Ross figure in a straightened wig, tight dress and high heels — an image of the 'feminine', 'whitened' black woman which is clearly not 'herself'. A similar scene occurs in another Debra Winger movie, the forthcoming *Black Widow*, where Winger also has to appear at a party in a borrowed dress and a hairdo which turn her temporarily into a 'feminine' as opposed to SW woman.

Jumpin' Jack Flash is on the cusp of several other contemporary film genres, one of which is the zany black performer's comedy (the Richard Pryor-type movie). Another is the Nine to Five genre — the office worker's revenge. Terry Doolittle, though good at her job, is not in the professional bracket of the Winger characters and lightens the tedium of her job in a banking emporium by swapping recipes and personal advice. Her break comes when an urgent plea for help appears on her screen, signed *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, and she is suddenly precipitated into a spy adventure, helping a British agent to escape the iron curtain. The movie emphasises the fantasy life of the woman stuck in a boring office job: her passion for old movies, romantic novels. In true Hollywood fashion, *Jumpin' Jack Flash* makes the desire for excitement come true, dramatising precisely the fantasy of being suddenly lifted into a thrilling role culminating in romance and escape from insignificance.

The extraordinary **Hour of the Star** (winner of the Best Film award at the Latin American Festival in Havana) by Brazilian filmmaker Suzana Amaral deals in a similar situation but one where the dreams and desires of a young, lonely woman living at breadline level in a Brazilian city are felt through their denial rather than their filmic fulfilment. This brilliant and moving film shows at every turn what real poverty and loneliness are, as its heroine Macabea (Marcelia Cartaxo — winner of the Best Actress Lion at Berlin), at the very bottom of her job market, the housing market and the love market, finds intellectual stimulus from information given with time-checks, physical excitement in dance music from the radio; where four women sharing a slum lodging watch silent

soap opera through their landlady's window. Like a bizarre parody of the North American SWW, Macabea wakes in the night to eat a piece of chicken from a foil container; she too is sexually unfulfilled and, as with her US counterpart, she too has her moment of traditional 'feminine' beauty when she dresses glamorously in contrast with her usual style.

Hour of the Star shows not only hardship but, more importantly, that even those in the most extreme hardship need passion and beauty in their lives. Macabea's tentative search for these is constantly undermined, yet the spirit which repeatedly surfaces gives an even greater sense of poignancy than these downfalls. When the film was previewed, many critics were heard to say that it was humorous; I can only say that I found it heartbreaking as only the relentless crushing of someone's hopes can be. The film's bleak irony is that the dreamy Macabea does indeed have her hour as a star; her split second of fantasy comes true but in a way that only confirms how, for the bottom of society's heap, dreams really don't. And the relation of Hollywood to such lives of such extreme loneliness and oppression is, the ending bitterly suggests, one of destructive irrelevance. □

TELEVISION

Voices of doom

Hugo Williams

'SOMETIMES I THINK perhaps we are all robots and I get a funny feeling', said Ludwig Wittgenstein. I got a funny feeling watching Duncan Campbell's *Secret Society* (BBC2) that the body-snatchers were among us, laying plans, lying low, lying in their teeth.

Campbell was investigating the emergency plans which would be used in Britain in time of crisis or war. That these would enable the government to place widespread controls on public order, freedom of movement and conscription of labour was hardly surprising; it was Campbell's revelations of a secret US/UK medical deal putting the needs of up to 400,000 US military troops above our own that made the flesh creep. 'In a crisis, civil patients would simply be sent home,' confirmed one hospital administrator. As Campbell described it, the British Isles would indeed become 'Airstrip One'. 'In the event of nuclear attack most civil servants are to remain at their desks. A chosen few will receive a telephone call: they are to pick up their papers and run to Horse Guards Parade where coaches will take them to bunkers outside the capital . . .' Campbell seemed concerned that emergency measures unratified by Parliament would then become law by default. Surely it hardly matters if we're all dead? But the suggestion is that these same regulations would be used in the event of civil rather than nuclear war.

Campbell's closely written and thoroughly researched material was densely packed into a half-hour programme. By comparison, the images were rather sparsely distributed and were mostly self-confessedly 'liberal pictures' of nuclear arms movements about the country. The absence of

visual coverage in a medium that usually relies too heavily on it only served to emphasise the sense of secrecy and mistrust hanging over the material, a sense partly undermined by Campbell's familiar narration-style, now too automatically associated with genuinely alarming facts. I imagine that his unremitting scepticism in the face of officialdom, delivered in those rather schoolmasterly tones, might in the end be self-defeating.

How different his script would have sounded in the doom-laden tones of John Hurt, who is currently adding another dimension to his iceberg and gravestone Aids saga. Out of the mist, rising perhaps from said iceberg, springs a series of green traffic lights, while Hurt announces terrifyingly that as from April Cathay Pacific will be running a second daily flight to Hong Kong with a third to be added in June.

'Fly non-stop,' commands Hurt 'and arrive in better shape' prompting the question: 'In better shape for what?' Haven't they all got AIDS over there?

By comparison, Mick Gold's timely **Victorian Values** (ITV) is narrated by the super-impartial-sounding Bamber Gascoigne, but then the series seems to be only incidentally subversive. More usually, it is straightforward documentary, last week on the subject of law and order and how Victorians like Jeremy Bentham, always good value mummified in his telephone kiosk at London University, tried to bring about a more humane way of dealing with criminals.

Before 1820, execution was the sentence for 200 different crimes; lesser criminals were herded together in huge rooms, 'seminaries of nastiness'; whipping and pillorying were common. Bentham himself invented a beating machine to mitigate the variance in muscle-propelled chastisement. In subsequent years, all manner of strange theories were tried out in the name of enlightenment. The Americans thought enforced silence was the answer: if a prisoner was caught talking he was beckoned to by the turnkey and beaten on the spot. William Crawford took this inspiration a step further with his theory of complete solitude and even designed a chapel with pews like 'upright coffins without lids' affording the inmate a view of only the pulpit. 'The first hours of the cell,' he said, 'are hours of great anguish, in which the heart imperceptibly yields up its impurities and is healed.' This 'Separate System' made use of sound-proofing and masks and 'a significant proportion' of prisoners went mad.

By 1864 the enlightened point of view had it that pain should be inflicted by hard labour, but that if there was the slightest hint of job satisfaction this would become 'light labour' and be invalidated. Thus, the Treadmill was born, a metaphor of pointlessness which the wretched prisoner was obliged to add to his existing sense of futility. 'The Crank' installed in the prisoner's cell, was a box with a stiff handle, on which the prisoner must clock up a given number of turns before meals. The enlightened Bentham, seeing the waste of commercial potential here, produced an idea which should appeal to the present government: free enterprise prisons. He envisaged the Panopticon, a circular, web-like system of work cells, brightly-lit for supervision by himself, installed in a darkened central area, with three-quarters of the profits going into his own pocket. □

New Statesman 8 May 1987

WORK IN PROGRESS

You're quite safe with us

Naseem Khan

YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD a steady background thump during the National Arts Debate last week at the National Film Theatre. This was the sound of the arts world beating its own drum. After all, if no one else is going to do it for you, you might as well do it yourself.

According to the speakers at the debate, it wasn't strictly necessary. The arts, each one claimed stalwartly, were now firmly on the political agenda. But this is not that easy to substantiate. They were clearly not at all on the agenda of the Tower Hamlets Liberal administration when it slashed the grant to the arts to ribbons. Nor are they significantly on the agenda of the Labour Party which — alone among parties — has no official arts policy with which to go into an election. Nor, despite disclaimers in the debate from Richard Luce, Minister for the Arts, have they been on the agenda of a Tory government that has cut the Arts Council's grant in real terms.

On the platform at the NFT Richard Luce, Mark Fisher and Clement Freud (under the genial chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Robinson) nonetheless exuded all the confidence of travelling salesmen with new catalogues. Luce, a rare participant in these debates, described growing support: 'People want more arts!' But this very popularity had, he said, caused problems. Where was the money for increased provision to come from? Nobody present batted an eyelid when he revealed that it should come from private sources. And a very good thing too, he said: 'Diversity of funding [leads to] greater freedom of expression.' His party in future would certainly go on 'acting as a catalyst for the private sector'.

Not so a future Labour government. There was scant new information in the debate — the scenarios are now all set — but one concerned Business Sponsorship. Would he, Mark Fisher, he was asked, continue operating the scheme? A slight pause could be discerned before Fisher replied firmly that, no, they would not. Certain types of business sponsorship were acceptable, but 'we wouldn't use taxpayers' money to seduce them into supporting the arts'. Clement Freud for the Alliance, on the other hand, would, and saw more dangers than Luce from possible indirect censorship.

Freud, surprisingly, gave much the least co-ordinated performance of the three contenders. Luce's policy — however much one disputes it — has a certain depressing consistency. Fisher, a little man who fights his corner with an engaging passion, knocked over skittle after skittle through sheer energy. Not so Freud, whose world-weary langour gave him some good jokes but not much to hang on to where policy was concerned. Certainly Luce's accusations that Alliance and Labour policies showed sinister sympathies could not be credited as anything more than the silliest of electioneering.

If silliness is one sign of approaching polls,

then the prevalence of public debates is another. What, one must ask, did this high-powered debate achieve? More to the point, who did it benefit? It was undoubtedly an extremely controlled affair: attendance lists were available in advance; questions had to be submitted beforehand — of which a mere nine were chosen to be answered during the debate. The ground was carefully selected to offer minimum challenge and no embarrassment to the Minister in particular.

In the blandest of contexts, a large audience listened obediently to the party lines and got few crumbs beyond the well-known staple loaves. 'I think we made a mistake in Tower Hamlets,' they heard Freud declare, 'and we're trying to make it better.' But what does this case say about the commitment of Liberal arts policy? Nobody asked. Luce — one interesting crumb — finally scotched the rumour that the Tories would put VAT on books: a dirty trick, he said, 'a good election ploy. We have absolutely *no plans* to do this whatsoever.'

Nevertheless, the initial answer to the question of who benefits from such debates must be that it's the politicians, who found themselves an up-market and docile audience of artocrats as well as eight minutes on Channel 4 news. There is, however, a longer-term advantage to be had from them: the creation of an arts lobby. And this, of course, is exactly what the sponsoring National Campaign for the Arts was up to.

The Campaign, a newish body, has a lot stacked against it: not least that its base has to be so broad as to make its outlines hazy. First and foremost the Campaign has set itself the job of persuading politicians that the arts matter — and not just for the pious quality-of-life arguments. Are there really any votes in the arts? Yes, says the Campaign, brandishing its recent Marplan survey. Answers to two simple questions asked of 1,500 adults around the country indicated that 49 per cent of the population support the increase of arts expenditure locally and centrally, while 30 per cent believe that the arts should be 'an important element of the political parties' election manifestos'.

The questions themselves can be criticised. Their existence without any context must rob the findings of some force. (Presumably just as many would have agreed that more money should be spent on almost anything: health, education, housing.) But they are still cheering indicators — to an arts world constantly demoralised by accusations of extreme minority status — of a possible wider constituency. Where it is, what it is and how it ties in with the broader fields of recreation, leisure, and the popular worlds of commercial arts like music, fashion, design and so on, is something that badly needs to be established. The National Campaign's modest survey cost them the grand sum of £600. The information that a more thoroughgoing survey could provide would, potentially, be invaluable. □

Books

JOURNALS

Post graduates

Rosalind Coward

The cultural theorists of a decade ago have discovered the joys of Amstrads and postmodernism; all they have lost, perhaps, is politics

'IT IS NEVER a good time to start a new journal. Even so, 1987 seems unpropitious to a remarkable degree. . . connoisseurs of the Unripe Time could be forgiven for regarding the present year as a vintage one.' So read the unexpected first words of a brand new theoretical journal, *Textual Practice*. If the diagnosis is correct it's all the more remarkable that *Textual Practice* is just one of three new journals to be published by Methuen at the very same moment.

New Formations (£6.95), *Cultural Studies* (£6.95) and *Textual Practice* (£7.95) have a lot in common — even more, that is, than the fact that several contributors to one journal seem to be on the editorial boards of at least one other. These journals are the inheritors of that left-wing project of cultural politics, the analysis of texts and representations, practised (largely) by academics from the Humanities and accompanied by claims of the political importance of these analyses. But now these articles are doused in postmodernist angst and in some cases possessed as well of a self-conscious 'style', uncharacteristic of their 1970s predecessors.

All the journals are strangely modest in their aims and aspirations. *New Formations* is perhaps the least cautious but even so appears parsimonious compared with the grandiose political claims made for theoretical journals a decade ago. Its editorial asserts that although 'there are no hard and fast definitions and no statements of position here, nevertheless a new journal does need some justification', which is then given as the commendable 'need for sustained critical engagement with the regimes of representation which have become a characteristic and peculiarly pervasive feature of the way power is exercised in contemporary societies'. *Textual Practice* offers a sort of hope-for-the-best pragmatism. *Cultural Studies* has no editorial at all, leaving the reader somehow to guess its politics or just to accept political and theoretical differences from the contributors.

Although there is nothing in any of the editorials that directly addresses this lack of belief in the possibility of a general theory, we are left in little doubt as to where this 'pessimism' or 'realism' (depending on your position) derives from. The genealogies of the articles speak for themselves. In *Textual Practice* and *New Formations* at least, references to the left-wing precursors of postmodernism abound. There's barely an article which doesn't mention Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida or the more recent



Considering that popular awareness of anarchism is on the level of the *Sun*, any contribution to raising public consciousness on the subject has to be welcome. Clifford Harper's powerful graphic illustrations of the anarchist experience of class struggle in *ANARCHY — A GRAPHIC GUIDE* (Camden Press, £5.95) capture the spirit of the idea and convey the urgency and purpose of anarchism. It is a pity that the vitality Harper gives to anarchism in his drawings is lost sight of in his prose. Feeding largely on George Woodcock's *Anarchism* — a book which has done grave disservice to the history and ideas of anarchism — Harper gilds refined gold by press-ganging alienated intellectuals and disgruntled bohemians from the Middle Ages to Oscar Wilde, the Dadaists and situationists, all of whom have little to do with anarchism. Their inclusion perverts anarchism into a liberal philosophy so broad as to be acceptable to everyone from The Adam Smith Institute to the Bennite Left of the Labour Party. The author would do well to remember his own quote from Kropotkin: 'Anarchism originated among the people, and it will preserve its vitality and creative force so long only as it remains a movement of the people.' Juxtaposing the selfless struggle of working-class militants such as Zapata and Makhno with the self-indulgent individualism of artistic and literary cliques and punk entrepreneurs such as Malcolm MacLaren serves only to sustain the myth of the liberal — as opposed to the democratic — origins of anarchism. (Stuart Christie)

theoreticians of postmodernism, Lyotard and Fredric Jameson.

I suppose that I have good reason to be delighted by these developments. After all, I was part of a movement which argued against the certainties of marxist categories, especially when it came to ideas of marxism as a way of uncovering historical truth or laying the foundations of predicting a clear historical progress. Journals like *M/F* and *Screen* in the mid-1970s argued precisely for the importance of understanding regimes of representation as constructing truths and the positions of subjectivity available to us in those representations. This movement supported texts where the illusion of fixed and coherent subjectivity was thrown in crisis, or enterprises based on 'bricolage', sustained borrowing and mixing of past discourses.

I should therefore welcome journals which have abandoned the pretence of general theories and whose contents range from 'Tissot on Onanism' (*Textual Practice*), 'Fashion/Orientalism and the Body' (*New Formations*) and a 'New Journal of the Plague Year' (on the plague in Sydney in 1900: *Cultural Studies*). These are all articles which trace the discursive construction of the body, subjectivity and, indeed, history. Certainly one or two of the articles in these journals are quite brilliant explorations of subjectivity, like Jonathan Dollimore's discussion of the relationship between Oscar Wilde and Gide where he opposes Wilde's genuinely transgressive desire to Gide's essentialist homosexuality.

Yet there is something quite dispiriting about these journals taken as a whole. They are, for example, an extremely sad reflection on how little British academics have learnt to communicate over the past decade. It is one thing to be unashamedly theoretical, and I've no objections. But some of the articles here are seriously autistic. Take Simon During in *Textual Practice*: 'Deliberation as doubt leads back to the phrase event, and, if one is not to conspire in the concealment of a *differend* one must punctuate the ebb and flow of phrases only by "Arrive-t-il".' This lack of interest in communicating is particularly galling in articles like Linda Hutchinson's 'Beginning to theorise postmodernism' which she does like tipping a ton of cement onto a tiddlywink by analysing Gillam's *Brazil*, D. M. Thomas' *White Hotel* and William Kennedy's *Legs*.

What is also dispiriting is the sense of how little has changed in theoretical academic discourse itself. Of course the displacement of marxism as an overriding paradigm has given these journals a superficially different flavour. The vision of Dick Hebdige, 'former expert on sub-cultural resistance', shouting at his noisy neighbours, 'members of an anarchic sub-culture' (*New Formations*), certainly marks the passing of time. But in so many significant ways the concerns here are the same as those of the late 1970s. A case in point is Denise Riley's 'Does Sex Have a History? Women and Feminism' (*New Formations*). Clear though this article may be, it precisely retraces discussions of seven years ago (with the same pragmatic conclusions) about whether or not feminism can talk about Woman or whether there are only different categories of 'woman' produced in different representations. Nor does the treatment of race seem much changed. There are

articles *about* race, but it still does not appear to be integrated into the political perspectives of individual writers.

There are other sources of the sense of stasis. I find it immensely irritating that, in spite of a spoken commitment to feminism, the 'knowledges' are almost exclusively male (usually continental) theorists. I find it extraordinary how little these articles refer to feminist work and how much the references look like highly conventional bibliographies for social sciences and philosophy PhD's. It would be easy to form the impression from these journals that ideas about 'the fragmentary subject', the lack of philosophical truths and certainties, derived in a straight line from Nietzsche to Foucault and Derrida, hopping across the Atlantic in the early 1980s and finally being named by the art establishment as post-modernism. Such an impression utterly obliterates the fact that these ideas have been part and parcel of feminist discussions about representations for the last decade.

I have a suspicion there's an interesting paradox behind the appearance of these journals in 1987. It isn't just that word-processors have increased productivity or that universities are insisting now on the importance of publishing research in 'respectable' journals. The naming of postmodernism by the art establishment seems to have 'authorised' left academics to talk again about culture without the superego of marxist theory. It would be a great shame if these new freedoms were wasted, if academic conventionality were allowed to swamp more open ways of evaluating culture and politics. There's a world of difference between abandoning general theories and abandoning the political space to which those theories were once addressed.

FICTION

The history woman

Sara Maitland

Moon Tiger

PENELOPE LIVELY *Deutsch* £9.95

HALF A CENTURY ago there was a World War.

I was born after it and there is something very important about the Europeans born before it that I simply do not understand. It seems imaginatively to have severed the century. Penelope Lively, who was born before it, but not as much before it as the central character of her novel, endeavours to re-join those severed halves by connecting the history of *everything*, from amoebae onwards, with those individuals who 'do not grow old as we who are left grow old' and the experiences of those who were left and have indeed grown old.

It is a bold attempt, if rather over-neatly packaged. Claudia Hampton is old and dying; she contemplates her whole life from her childhood to her present. Once, long ago, she was a war correspondent on the Western Desert Campaign: there she fell in love with a young tank regiment officer, who was killed in action. She miscarried their child. His life stopped; hers did not.

Claudia Hampton, moreover, is a popular historian who has always treated history in terms of decisive individuals; now she tries to treat her own life as she has treated others, as a fragment of world history. As an honest historian she 'allows' other voices to have their own autonomous commentary: her brother's, her sister-in-law's and, particularly, her daughter's.

Technically, Lively does a really beautifully crafted thing with these interjected viewpoints, picking up a passage from one consciousness, repeating some of it through different eyes and then moving the narrative forward in the second voice: stunningly economical and revealing. But I had a real problem with the book — or, rather, two interconnected problems.

One is formal and I shall return to it; the other is Lively's view of history itself. The novel is based on the unarguable premise that the past creates the present, but it does not apparently interact with it at all. The subjectivity of the historian — although the central emotional context of the book is the subjectivity of this particular historian — does not affect the past. History is presented as a straight line and the present is simply the still point on that line. In this sense nothing can *happen* in the present and this, for me, is the crucial formal weakness of the book: it lacks a dynamic. Claudia learns nothing in the process of her dying; even her dead lover's diary changes nothing in the way she understands her own, or a larger, history. Her dying is simply a narrative vantage point for telling the story of her past. For example, in her daughter's view her mother is wrong about her;

NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE EVENTS

Thursday 14 May at 7.30pm

Victoria Glendinning on Rebecca West

Leading feminist, lover of H.G. Wells, astringent political commentator, outstanding novelist, acerbic critic and brilliant conversationalist, Dame Rebecca West dominated the British literary scene for over 50 years; she died aged 90 in 1983. Bernard Levin once described her as the greatest Englishwoman since Elizabeth the First.

Victoria Glendinning has just written the first authorised biography of Rebecca West, and she will discuss her life, works and recorded interviews with **Jeremy Silver** of the National Sound Archive.

Victoria Glendinning's **Rebecca West — A Life** is published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson with whom this event is organised.

For booking and further details contact: **The National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS. Telephone: 01-589 6603/4.**

Tickets: £2.00/£1.50 concessions includes glass of wine. Seating is limited and early booking is recommended.

THE NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE — PART OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY

but Claudia remains untouched, unaffected by her ignorance, by her failure to acquire important historical data. The reader has 'one over her', as though we were rival academics, but in personal terms her own history teaches her nothing — nor do her reflections restructure that history.

The conservatism of Lively's form thus fits tidily with her conservative view of history: that there is a position from which truth may be observed, even though we frail human beings usually fail to observe it fully or perfectly. The subjectivity of the historian affects what is chosen for observation, but does not affect the thing observed: a point made in the slightly superficial running debate between Claudia and her brother, an economist, about the relative merits of their own chosen fields of study — though their complementarity is stressed by the rather odd insertion of an adolescent incestuous affair and offered, though discreetly, in terms of some rather dear natural gender difference.

Having said that I don't agree with Lively's apparent ideology, and that I think her form overused and static, it may sound a bit silly to say that I liked reading *Moon Tiger*: Lively is both knowledgeable and fluent but, more importantly, she really is trying to write a novel about something important intellectually: how we are to understand our own past.

Too few 'character centred' novelists really bother to bring intellectual debate into the centre of their books and it is enjoyable to see the engagement. □

FICTION

Labour of love

Liz Heron

The Wrench

PRIMO LEVI trans. WILLIAM WEAVER *Michael Joseph* £9.95

WRITTEN EARLIER than Primo Levi's last two books published here, *The Wrench* arrives as a modest final testament. Where those books that have earned him his brilliant reputation turned the light of his insights as an Auschwitz survivor on moral and personal themes, this book's scope is smaller, its allusions less direct. But what makes it a fitting epitaph against the tragedy of Levi's recent suicide is its status as a valedictory to his work as a chemist, which he gave up to write full-time in 1975.

'We can and must fight to see that the fruit of labour remains in the hands of those who work, and that work does not turn into punishment; but love or, conversely, hatred of work is an inner, original heritage, which depends greatly on the story of the individual and less than is believed on the productive structures within which the work is done.' It's this philosophy of identity expressed through work that gathers these randomly assorted, sometimes meandering stories into a reflective whole. It's not the work of the time-servers and the assembly liners, so scorned by the book's restless, truculent hero Liberto Faussone, but the autonomous work that rewards skill and judgment with sundry satisfactions.

So liable to extinction is the potential for this kind of artisanal pride (though less so in Italy than in Britain) that the mock heroic nature of Liberto's work seems all the more appropriate. A rigger whose skills make him a specialist, he stabilises bridges in India and Calabria, mounts pylons in the Alpine heights, upends an offshore oil derrick in Alaska. This recreates work as a way of life, a high adventure, a challenge and a quest, a freedom from the traps of monotony.

All of these tales, framed by the elemental tranquility of the Russian landscape (so differently evoked in *If Not Now, When?*), emerge

as reminiscences foisted on the narrator, an older fellow-Piedmontese whose work has also taken him away from home; a paint chemist — Levi once again as autobiographer.

It's hard to sustain an imaginative engagement with rivets, pulleys and ballbearings. This makes some of the stories less successful than others. Here the materials and processes are less delicately amenable than in *The Periodic Table*, where the alchemical science proved a sheer and faultless analogue for the art of transmuting into fable the elements of Levi's own life; distilled, condensed, crystallised or vapourised, as well as supplying ample metaphors and similes for human experience and character. It's when digressions mutate into reflection and the monologues become colloquy about the value and meaning of work that the writing is again burnished with the glow of Levi's humanity, enriched by his fascination with the incidentals of everyday life, its tics of speech and behaviour, its pursuit of mysteries that science can sometimes solve.

'Beating Copper', as well as detailing how copper-bottomed pans are made, relates the saga of an artisan's life and the death of his craft. For the copper beater and for his son (Liberto) work is life, as the narrator confirms when he calls on the two devoted, dessicated aunts who wait for the rigger's news and fleeting visits, bemoaning failed attempts at matchmaking. For the narrator himself work is a choice between the love of science — what can be touched, transformed and palpably tested — which, like all work shaped by the hands, is a vigorous tussle with matter, and the writer's more enervating, if less physically hazardous task.

The choice, it seems, was a hard one. Levi tells Liberto the story of Tiresias, whose encounter with a tangle of copulating snakes turned him into a woman for seven years. Once restored to maleness, he was uniquely placed to settle an argument between Jupiter and Juno. When Juno's displeasure blinded him, Jupiter consoled him with the gift of prophecy. '... I too had encountered snakes in my path, and that encounter had changed my condition, giving me a strange power of speech.' That Levi's terrible encounter has finally claimed his life can only make us value the more the words he has left behind. □

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This man, who always seems so sure of himself and of what he has achieved since starting with nothing, is pretending to look up a number in the telephone book but I know by the hang of his head that he is asleep. And all of a sudden he looks vulnerable, which is not quite fair. People have done this to me before, and I don't like it. Seeing that sureness lost in the weight of sleep, I can no longer feel pleasantly young and unreliable, but suddenly I am as old as time and responsible, the only one left awake.

LETTERS

Aspire not

Sandra Trotman, Kraainem, Belgium

If I were Tony Mooney I wouldn't clutch too eagerly at the perceived social class of West Indian immigrants as an explanation for their performance in British schools (*NS* 20 March). He makes much of the statistic that of male West Indians born outside the UK, 89 per cent are in manual occupations. According to his logic this puts them at the bottom of the class scale in the UK and thus their children at the bottom of the UK educational scale.

An article entitled 'The West Indian braves' (*Guardian* 11 June 1986) described the well known (to West Indians, anyway) phenomenon of relative West Indian success in the USA and its reverse in the UK. This extract from the article on West Indians in the USA may give him a different view of reality:

A profile of the West Indian population shows that one in two is skilled, 31 per cent are unskilled, and only a small percentage come from the professional and white collar class. Interestingly, similar figures for West Indian immigration to Britain show that more skilled migrants went to Britain than to the United States.

From my own experience I have come to the conclusion that the greater the total immersion of the child of West Indian background in the UK educational system, the higher are the chances of failure. There is a distinct difference between the aspirations and educational

achievements of children of West Indian parentage who, like me, obtained part of their schooling in the Caribbean and the aspirations and educational achievements of those who were born in the UK. The educational and social grounding we received in the Caribbean stood us in good stead since, on arrival in England, we were often put in advanced classes (yes, I know this goes against the received lore in the UK but it is a fact) and later, in secondary school, we were then able to resist British careers and other teachers who urged us to pursue non-professional pursuits and not to set ourselves 'unrealistic goals'. These goals, incidentally, would have been the norm if we had continued in the educational system in the Caribbean. Children of West Indian background born in the UK do not have this vital shield against teachers' racism in schools.

Popular choices

Jürgen Maier, Böblingen, West Germany

'Labour needs electoral reform' (*NS* 17 April) was a promising headline, followed by a rather disappointing article by Robin Cook. As a mainland European, familiar with Proportional Representation, I always regarded as archaic an electoral system where 58 per cent of the voters voted against Thatcher and got a parliament with 60 per cent Tories. PR ensures that a party with 42 per cent popular support gets just 42 per cent of the MPs. Cook's AV proposal would

also yield parliaments which simply misrepresent the popular vote, however somewhat less extremely. But how can you argue against 'the single most corrosive force in contemporary British politics' — tactical voting — by a proposal which seems to me an essentially tactical one as well?

The only reasons Cook gives against PR are: 1. It is an SDP proposal; 2. It allows too many 'third party' MPs. Now these arguments can hardly be called convincing ones. Why should a party with, say, 25 per cent popular support not get just 25 per cent of the MPs but rather a number of seats depending on how many supporters of the other parties dislike it least among the parties they don't vote for? Why is it 'representative' if you want to keep 'third parties' out?

Cook seems to promote his AV proposal simply because he supposes that this system may result in an overall parliamentary Labour majority even with less than 50 per cent popular support. I never believed that a left-wing party could really change a society with less than 50 per cent of the people being prepared to support it by at least voting for it. An electoral system creating artificial parliamentary majorities is the wrong instrument for changing a society. Cook obviously believes it isn't. Personally, I think electoral reform makes sense only if you promote credible alternatives rather than tactical ones. But that electoral reform is necessary is of course obvious.

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MON 11 MAY

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

Rumble of tumbrils

Diana Eden

THIS MONTH, according to my birth certificate and every mirror that I pass, I shall be 41 years old. I coyly anticipate your boundless generosity and it is in order to prevent an avalanche of diamonds, furs and face-lift vouchers (though, with the exception of Robert Maxwell, a cheque from no one has ever caused offence) that I swiftly add that I have already ordered the present I desire.

It is a sweatshirt boldly emblazoned with the message: LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS AND PROUD OF IT. Yes, at 41 I have found the courage to come out. It is time for those among us who were raised neither in palaces nor paper bags to wear our white collars with pride. What's wrong with mock-Tudor semis, caravans and carports? Let's hear it for chiming doorbells, for heated dinner trollies, for Tupperware and Scarborough.

There are some who would claim that I have long been morbidly obsessed with class. They would be right. But I would claim it is impossible to spend 41 years in England without class-consciousness coursing through one's veins and, in my case, over Easter, blood heat achieving boiling point. Walking through a London park, I fell into illuminating conversation with a group of little boys. When I asked them where they lived, it became clear that this was a question carrying a multi-choice of answers: all of them had both a town and country home and each address was more impressive than the last. Rolling trippingly from tiny tongues came shires and postal districts which I had previously encountered only on the printed page of Jennifer's Diary in my dentist's waiting-room.

I should and shall give those beguiling lads their

due. I am confident that there was absolutely nothing amiss with any one of them that a month spent sweeping chimneys could not cure. However, the Industrial Revolution is rumoured to be over and the Clean Air Act seems set to stay, so, it being Easter, seasonal if uncharitable images of crucifixions sprang easily to mind — followed by thoughts of thumbscrews, tanks, machine guns and wholesale genocide.

And it was via such idle, militaristic musings that I hit upon what must have been the sole saving grace about the uniformly dire days of National Service: at least then, during the initial weeks of basic training, the male British classes were obliged to mix. Occasionally some mouths fell so wide agape with revelation that the silver spoons dropped out. My friend Howard, a former public-school boy who reformed so successfully that he is now a social worker, came home on his first leave from the Navy and declared, saucer-eyed, that 'there was good and bad in all men, be they Officers or Ratings'. His father bit his pipe in half: 'Good God man — you've become a bloody Commie!'

No, you alarmist nit-wits, I am not about to advocate a return to two years professional kill-drill. I merely share with you the following dispiriting birthday thought: though National Service may have ended, the apparently inalienable right of the rich to purchase their sons' education, contacts and a permanently Easter-primrosed path survives and thrives. It is now possible for boys to progress from public school to Oxbridge and thence to the City or the Bar in unbroken, splendid insulation. Possibly the only time they will ever behold children like my own is when they are passing sentences upon them.

More than ever, we are a class-ridden and class-segregated society. Which is a scandal and a sadness. When the guillotine arrives I might well learn to knit. Or perhaps I'll simply pass around the After Eight upon a paper doily. □

FIRST PERSON

The plots thicken

Gary Herman

THE SEASON FOR conspiracy theories has come round again. Some of you may be unaware of the scenario.

Briefly, a couple of months ago my paper, *Computer News*, ran a story linking the curious deaths of two computer scientists both of Asian origin who had both worked for the UK's major defence contractor, Marconi, on secret projects. The deaths were remarkable enough for the coroner at one inquest actually to talk of 'a James Bond connection'.

Nobody in the national media picked up on this until months after the events, when the chief reporter of *Computer News* did what any journalist could have done and none did — he put together the inquest reports, a few press releases touching on work going on at Marconi and comments gleaned from the families of the dead men and Marconi itself.

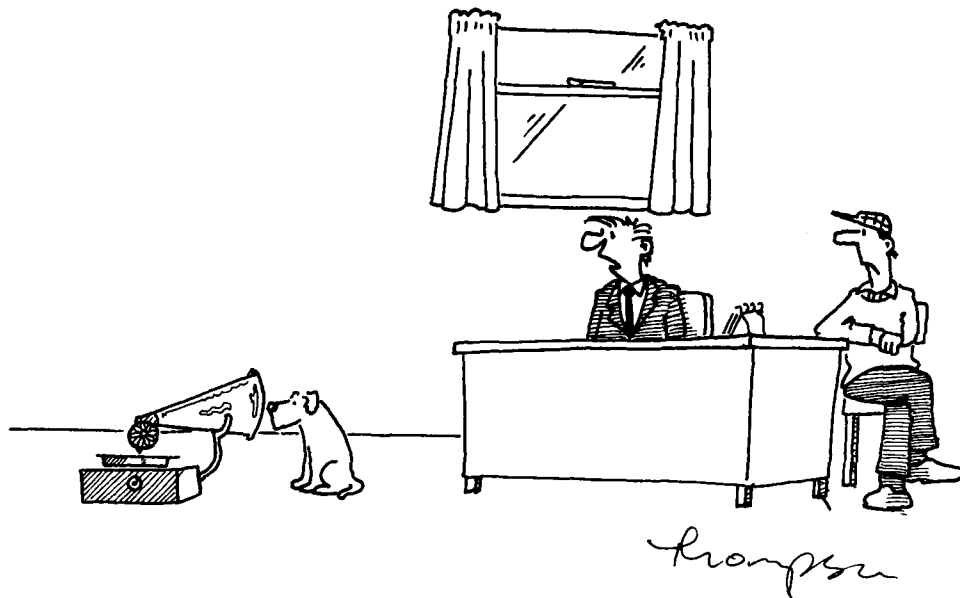
Marconi, of course, denied everything and made threatening noises. Then a third computer scientist disappeared.

He was also Asian and possibly had known one of the other victims. His area of expertise was similar and he had been engaged on a defence project evidently related to the work done by the original two scientists.

These incidents had all the hallmarks of a conspiracy. Early theories drew parallels between the work the three Asians had been doing on anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and the Reagan administration's Star Wars project. The connections were made in terms of the computer software needed to guide missiles in both real and simulated battles. Submarine guidance and targetting, everybody agreed, was very much more complex than any other kind. Even Marconi concurred. 'Compared to finding things underwater, the sky is a piece of cake,' said a spokesman.

Now, any self-respecting conspiracy theorist should treat such comments from one of the major players in the events with deep suspicion. But, by this time, the media had latched on to the story in a big way. The ministrations of the BBC, ITV, Fleet Street (and Wapping) — not to mention journalists from across the globe — proved too difficult to resist. Very soon, *Computer News* was awash with press enquiries and requests for interviews. The staff were happy to oblige. If the Beeb had the story, so should ITV; if *Paris Match* were covering it, so would *Figaro-Magazine*. To each, ready opinions were dispensed — sometimes contradictory, but never less than intriguing and, at first, well and truly focused on Star Wars (very popular in the demonology of international relations).

I found myself talking to a representative of an Italian newspaper one day. I told him that my editor was unavailable, being at that time in the USA for personal reasons. 'Will he be talking to



'Tell me, when did you first notice his deafness?'

scientists?' asked the Italian. 'I'm not at liberty to tell you what he'll be doing,' was my fairly innocent reply.

'Ah!' gasped the reporter, 'so there is an American connection.'

Soon everybody got into the act. One report quoted Frank Barnaby, former director of SIPRI (the Stockholm Institute for Peace Research) as saying that he 'would have guessed' that the KGB were responsible for the business. A number of other suspicious deaths had by then been uncovered, dating from 1982 to a few days ago. In the same report, Tony Wilson of the Electronics for Peace group commented that the affair 'has all the arrogant marks of a CIA operation'. It gives detente a whole new meaning.

Everybody is agreed that this is 'an affair' (except, perhaps, Marconi and a few chaps on the *Sunday Times*). But none of the commentators can agree on what it is about or who may be responsible.

And this creates perfect soil for conspiracy theories. Inevitably, new or previously overlooked bodies are eagerly sought after by the press in the hope that one of them will provide the key to unlock the mystery. It's a gruesome task that may not end until our very own 'ComputerGate' unfolds. But the secret world may cover its tracks too well for that, in which case we will fall back on contrivance.

Nobody now seriously proposes Star Wars as a motivating factor in the deaths, although key

Western defences and dastardly Eastern secret services loom large in the 'explanations'. The truth — like the deaths themselves — may be very much messier and more complicated.

My own preferred enemies are one or more of the Pakistani, Israeli or South African secret services and my own preferred motive is an attempt to acquire the technology necessary to build a guided missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead. But pretty much any combination of security or espionage organisations can be squeezed into the narrative without much difficulty. It may even be the case that some of the deaths are exactly what they seem to be — suicides. To accept that might mean giving up a more comfortable picture, since conspiracy theorists always favour broad views encompassing many mysteries. They value explanatory power, which becomes a sort of proxy social or political power.

There can be little doubt that something very nasty is going on, but even the best-intentioned elements of the press are acting in the dark because of the secrecy which shrouds much of the lives and work of the computer scientists who have died. Without the light a public enquiry could shed, the best we can hope for is the Manichaean worldview of the conspiracy theorist. The real conspiracy is bound to be more interesting and, tragic to say, more frightening. □

Gary Herman is features editor of Computer News.

FOOD

Darling spuds of May

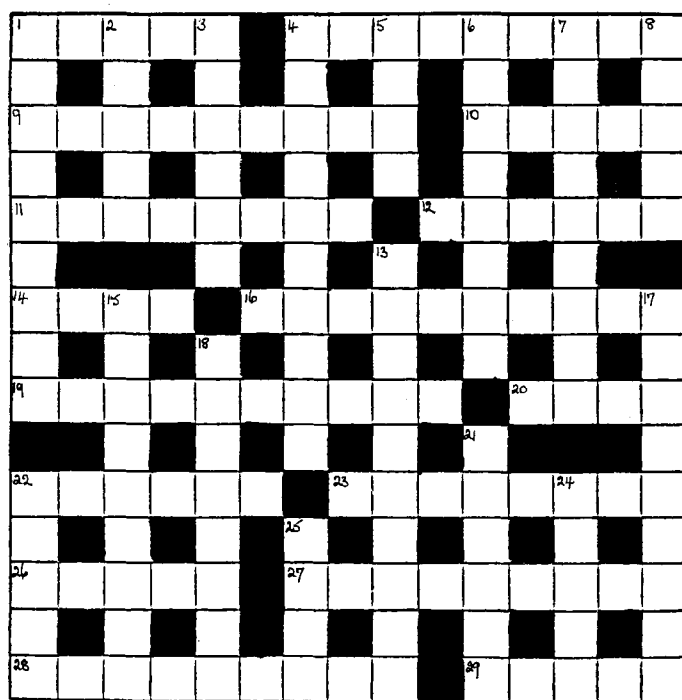
Colin Spencer

TWO DAYS of brilliant sunshine over the Easter holiday made us more aware of spring and the appetite began to long for those early summer foods and dishes. But April, the cruellest month, is indeed bleak and May is little better for the new spring foods. In my own garden, there is a little sorrel, parsley and spinach. There are new shoots of lovage, celery leaves and marjoram, good for flavourings and soups but not much else.

Our home produce in the shops is not vastly stimulating either. There's watercress, rhubarb, those unnerving cucumbers in polythene condoms, rubbery mushrooms which bounce in the pan and iceberg lettuce which only succeeds in tasting of chilled water. Of course, there are always the imported foods thoroughly to bewilder our seasonal awareness. There are vegetables which do not shatter our sense of time and place, like new potatoes from Cyprus or celery from Israel, but am I, in April, going to accept one of my all-time favourites, broad beans, or artichokes, from Spain; or will the palate resist seduction and maintain symmetry? But the real rebellion exerts its gut feeling at the sight of strawberries in February. There is no pleasure in such gross

Weekend Crossword 1556

£3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1556, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA, by first post 18 May.



Name _____

Address _____

New Statesman 8 May 1987

ACROSS

1. Man who would be well-bred if there were no birds about (5)
4. Exchange is about to ring me — it supplies weather information (9)
9. Old man back in place reassembling a piece of equipment (9)
10. Old ladies put in a coin to make a collection (5)
11. Unenergetic and so losing the record? (8)
12. Would be unhappy if died surrounding this force (6)
14. Information from all quarters (4)
16. Roughly alters mine to remove projections (10)
19. Farm workers carry something to drink in pots (10)
20. Formerly single and about to start courting (4)
22. Cannon-fire in a steamship is a grim experience (6)
23. Western European is standing surrounded by food (8)
26. Ruin part of the law reckoned to be watertight (5)
27. The weed sounds like a foppish creature (9)
28. They prevent people forgetting about baby-sitters for example (9)
29. Knotty points found in a number of poems (5)
5. An animal comes up in a rush (4)
6. A period of inner conflict? (8)
7. A writer who discovers a different art in including the old (9)
8. Files a note to artists (5)
13. Scents a woman put in cavities after love (10)
15. Not coloured light for tree (9)
17. Trumpeters announce that the country is after the return of a famous footballer (9)
18. Clothing material which lets an Irishman about fifty take part in winter sports (8)
21. Confine one after the other by the sound of it (6)
22. Channel by the Needles? (5)
24. I competed with climbers (5)
25. Not doing anything during unpaid leave (4)

SET SQUARE

Solution to 1554

D	A	S	H	B	O	A	R	D	J	A	C	O	B	A
A	H	R	T	E	I	H	A							
T	R	A	D	I	C	E	C	O	N	T	A	I	N	
E	L	M	L	I	G	R	J							
S	A	L	E	M	I	M	B	R	O	G	L	I	O	
L	O	A	E	K	I	I								
D	O	A	G	E	R	L	O	C	K	E	R	S		
E														
F	O	R	E	M	E	N	P	I	E	T	I	E	S	
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A	L	B	E	S	C	E	N	T	K	I	L	L	S	
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I	L	L	W	I	L	L	C	H	A	I	R	E	D	
S	L	G	K	H	T	I	L							
M	O	A	N	S	S	T	E	V	E	N	A	G	K	

Prizewinners to 1554

Danny Bethell (Cardiff)
P. Collins (London SE5)
D. L. L. Clarke (Headington, Oxford)

seasonal inversion.

There are still spring greens around and one of the best dishes, which goes with almost everything, is bubble and squeak. Happy childhood experiences of food make one fiercely loyal to the dishes we ate then, and I still insist that bubble and squeak is made just with spring greens and mashed potato. This, I have been told, is an Irish dish, colcannon, though I make colcannon with mashed spud, kale and spring onion and it is never fried — see below. Bubble and squeak, being a dish of left-overs, usually has cold beef added to it, a real fry-up in fact, the idea of which I cannot find very appealing. But the most non-conformist bubble and squeak is that made by Cliff Richard's mother, which comprised red and green cabbage, macaroni, bacon and onions. Sounds almost as disgusting as the junk food diet Cliff claims he lives off now.

So what are more good things we can make out of the real seasonal food? Mint is not the only herb to flavour new potatoes with. The other day, I steamed them with a large sprig of rosemary and they were wonderfully aromatic. I also found that I needed only four or five of the smallest leaves of sorrel to flavour a herb wine sauce to go into a fish pie.

After a recent visit to Ireland, I began to get interested in the humble spud and what they do with it there. They are keen on floury potatoes — British Queen, Kerr's Pink and Golden Wonder. They never peel them and, if they break in the boiling, they pour off most of the water and let

them finish cooking in their own steam. All the recipes below are Irish; they cost little but taste great, whatever the season.

Potato and Fresh Herb Soup (serves 4)

Large sprig of rosemary
3 bay leaves
1 large onion, diced
1lb (450g) potatoes, peeled and diced
1oz (25g) butter
Generous bunch of parsley, finely chopped
Bunch of chives, chopped finely
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
5flox (150ml) single cream

Bring 2½ pints (1400ml) of water to the boil and simmer the rosemary and bay leaves for ten minutes. Discard the herbs. Melt the butter in a saucepan and add the diced potatoes and onions. Stir for a moment or two, then add the water which the herbs were cooked in. Simmer for 20 minutes, add the parsley and chives together with seasoning. Leave to cool, then blend and reheat gently, adding the cream.

Colcannon

1lb (450g) spring greens or kale
2 bunches spring onions
¼ pint (150ml) milk
1½lb (675g) potatoes
3oz (85g) butter
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Melted butter to serve

Wash the greens or kale and cut into strips. Cook in a little boiling salted water until tender, about three to five minutes. Drain well. Chop the spring onions and cook in the milk for a few minutes. Boil the potatoes until tender. Drain, then mash them. Stir in the greens, milk and onions. Add the butter, salt and pepper to taste and beat the mixture so it has plenty of air in it. Serve with extra butter melted on top.

Champ (serves 4)

1½lb (675g) potatoes
Bunch of spring onions, chopped
Large bunch of chives
8flox (225ml) milk
2oz (50g) butter
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Peel and boil the potatoes until tender. Meanwhile, simmer the spring onions in the milk for three minutes. Stir them into the potatoes with the butter and chives. Mash into a purée.

Potato and Herb Salad

1½lb (675g) small new potatoes
Large sprig of rosemary
5flox (150ml) vinaigrette sauce
3tbsp fresh thyme, mint and chives, chopped

Scrub the potatoes, prick them with a fork and steam them with the rosemary. Whilst still hot, toss in the vinaigrette and fresh chopped herbs. Serve warm.

Weekend competition

No 2974

Set by Eric the Red

In the nick of time it seems the left has come up with a common cause, an emancipatory project that can at last make sense of eight years' suffering under the Conservatives and provide a real alternative: tactical voting. But, like all ideas whose time has come, it needs popularisers as well as visionaries. With only weeks to go, it's up to you. Inspirational songs, please, to the tune of The Internationale, The Red Flag or Avanti Popolo, by Wednesday 20 June.

No 2971

Set by Margaret Rogers

Updates of proverbs for use as ads or propaganda.

Report

By Gray Dorn

'The pun,' as an ad man in a Les Blair TV play once remarked, 'has taken over from the epic novel as the cultural focal point of our society.' And the catchphrase from everything else: Political convictions? — What's yours called? Commodities have feelings, too. These days, when people talk about solidarity and achievement, they're probably referring to Mars Bars . . . Actually, all this gratuitous cynicism is simply to fill up space because although we received *more* entries than we've had for months, they were also the *worst* entries I've ever seen. It wasn't just the newcomers, even our regulars were well off form. A special mention to Eric Gratley aged 14 of Andover for: 'The Man from Del Monte he say, "Join the Contras, you bastards".' Immature perhaps, but promising. And that just leaves these, at £3 each.

Many hands would like work

JOHN STANLEY

Nothing exceeds like Access

VINCE MACGILL

There is nothing like a Daimler

WILL BELLENGER

A stitch up in time solves crime

DAVID TOLEY

There's no smoke without carcinoma

MARION GILMORE

Better sheath than sorry

JIM CHARLES

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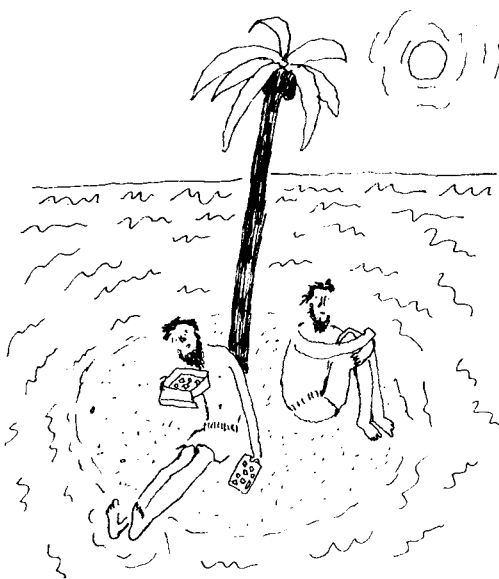
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'Who's been eating from the bottom layer?'



Chess

FINAL STANDINGS in the SWIFT International in Brussels were: 1-2. Kasparov and Ljubojevic 8½ pts, 3. Karpov 7, 4-5. Korchnoi and Timman 6½, 6. Tal 6, 7. Larsen 5½, 8-9. Torre and van der Wiel 5, 10. Winants 3½, 11. Short 3, 12. Meulders 1. The world champion started the last round ½ a point behind Lubomir Ljubojevic, the crucial pairings being Ljubojevic-Karpov and Kasparov-Tal. Karpov was already reconciled to third place and Ljubo was happy with a draw, so they signed a peace treaty after 14 well-known moves. This gave Kasparov a clear-cut target. It turned out to be a sitting duck:

Kasparov-Tal, 1987 SWIFT International, Rd. 11. Nimzo-Indian. 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 0-0 5. Bd3 d5 6. exd5 exd5 7. Nge2 c5 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. a3 cxd4 10. exd4 Bxc3 11. bxc3 Ne7? Black's conduct of this game is unworthy of the genius of Mikhail Tal. The move played does carry the positional threat of 12... Bf5, with an exchange that would leave White weak on the light squares. But this is easily stopped, leaving Black with a horribly passive position. 11... h6 and 11... Bg4 were both better choices. 12. Qc2 Bd7 13. Bg5 Ng6 14. f4 With the simple but effective plan of breaking up

Black's K-side through the further advance of the f-pawn. h6 15. Bxf6 Qxf6 16. f5 Ne7 17. Ng3 Nc8 18. Rf4 Nd6 19. Qf2 Rfe8 20. Nh5 Qd8 21. Nxe7! So that if 21... Kxg7 22. f6 + followed by Qh4 is mating. I suppose Tal plays on for the sake of appearances, though the whole thing looks rather ugly to me. Ne4 22. Bxe4 Rxe4 23. f6 Kh7 24. Rxe4 dxe4 25. Qf4 Bc6 26. Re1 Qf8 27. c4 Qxa3 28. Nf5 Qf8 29. Re3 Bd7 30. Rg3 Bxf5 31. Qxf5 + 1-0.

Tal consumed 118 minutes of clock-time (just two less than the maximum permitted for the first 40 moves) on this sub-standard effort, his only loss in the tournament. I suspect that the reason why he put up such feeble resistance is that the charismatic tactician of the 1960s has fallen into the habit of playing tournaments in the manner of a lazy waning star: select the victims you can count on beating and agree a draw with the others before anything happens. That scores well enough when you can rely on being treated with respect, but leaves you ill-prepared for a real fight.

I can never bring myself to think of Ljubojevic as one of the heavyweight GMs, though results like this say that he is. Isn't there more opportunism than strategy in his style? Maybe it's just the contrast with his predecessor as Yugoslavia's top GM — Gligoric's games

were such a rich and elegant vintage. In his youth (he'll be 37 this November) Ljubo used to walk on the wild side. He was deadly against all but the strongest GMs, but they were expected to show him up. A comment by Korchnoi on a game at the 1973 European Team Finals in Bath comes to mind: 'From Ljubojevic one can expect any sort of foolhardiness'. Korchnoi won that one, though even then only with extreme difficulty, but now he has reached the stage of his career when the whirligig of time is liable to belt him in the mouth as it swings round:

Ljubojevic-Korchnoi, 1987 SWIFT International, Rd. 8. Italian Game 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. b4 Bb6 6. d3 d6 7. a4 Now established as the 'modern way' of handling the Italian Game, this is just the way that the English master Bird used to play it a century ago! a5 8. b5 Ne7 9. Nbd2 Ng6 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Bb3 d5 Although this looks like a natural way to equalise, it allows the White Bishops sweeping diagonals and endangers the survival of Black's Bb6. 11... c6 seems a reasonable alternative. 12. Ba3 Re8 13. exd5 Nxd5 14. Ne4 Ndf4? Because of White's next he now loses Bishop for Knight and becomes very vulnerable on the light squares. 14... h6 was better. 15. Nfg5 Be6 16. Nxe6 Nxe6 17. g3 Kh8 18. Qf3 f6 19. h4! Ngf8 20.

Rad1 Qd7 21. Rfe1 Rad8 22. Bc4 h6 23. Qh5 Nh7 24. Kh2 Ba7 25. Rf1 Bb8 A revolting move to play, but nothing else would dissuade White from the projected advance f4-f5. 26. Nc5 Nxc5 27. Bxc5 b6!? 28. Ba3 c5 Losing the exchange, but Korchnoi hopes that his Queen will be able to break out and cause confusion. 29. bxc6 Qxc6 30. Bb5 Qxc3 31. Bxe8 Qxa3 32. Bb5 Bd6 33. d4 exd4 34. Rfe1 Be5 35. f4 Bd6 36. Re8 + Rxe8 37. Qxe8 + Bf8 Black has claims to counterplay, with 2 pawns for the exchange and the White King rather exposed. But now he is made to pay a terrible price for neglecting the white squares. 38. f5! Qf3 39. Qe6! Qxd1 40. Be4 Qc2 + 41. Kh3 Qxc4 The only way to avoid mate. 42. Qxc4 This seems a pretty good point for Black to resign. Korchnoi continued to hope for a bit of foolhardiness, but Ljubo just marched his King in on the white squares [1-0, 53].

I'm trying to think of a way in which Nigel Short's result — at least he finished ahead of one of the Belgians — can be seen as a blessing in disguise. His interzonal opponents will be lulled? Encouraged, yes. We'll learn to stop counting our world champions before they're hatched? Probably the one potential benefit is that he may be persuaded to give up that damned dubious Dutch Defence.

George Botterill

This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

□ An Alsatian trained to steal meat has been raiding butchers' shops. The dog swooped twice at Telford, Shropshire, snatching five pounds of sausages and a pack of pork chops. It ran to a waiting car where a woman grabbed the loot and drove off. — *Daily Mirror* (Amanda Welles)

□ An extraordinary idea of turning Britain into an enormous think tank by introducing something called 'The National Suggestion Box' is shortly to be floated at a reception at the House of Commons. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

□ Teachers have been warned to look out for 'hic-tec' cheating by pupils taking exams this month. The latest versions of computer watches have big memory banks which can be programmed with vital information before a student enters the examination room. One in particular has a memory which can store 1000 characters. Facts, figures and formulae can be displayed at the touch of a button. — *Sunday Post* (George Moor)

□ Eight students from the Rolls-Royce aero-engine factory in Derby have spent 12 weeks crafting a stainless steel font for Derby Cathedral, with engravings on all four sides. They comprise a dove, a crucifix, a coat of arms and... the Rolls Royce logo. — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

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